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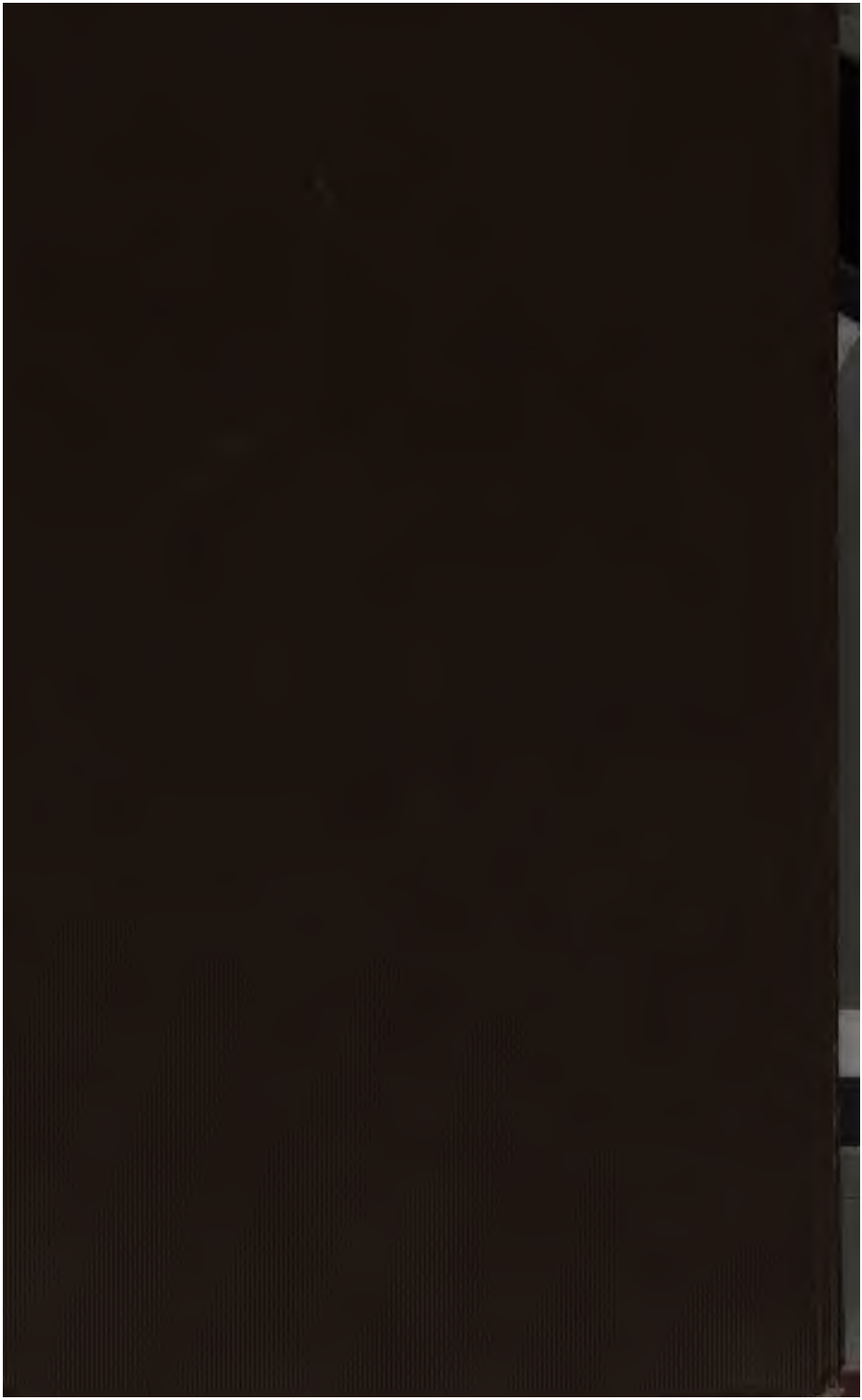

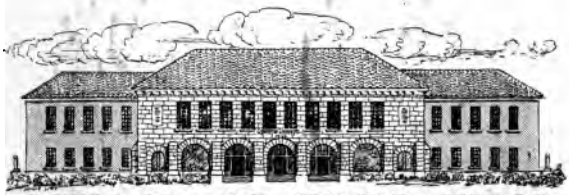

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HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY,

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CHILDHOOD
IN LITERATURE AND ART

WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

A Study

BY

HORACE E. SCUDDER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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TO

S · C · S ·

WHO WAS A CHILD WHEN THIS BOOK
WAS WRITTEN

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CHILDHOOD IN LITERATURE AND ART

I

INTRODUCTION

THERE was a time, just beyond the memory of men now living, when the Child was born in literature. At the same period books for children began to be written. There were children, indeed, in literature before Wordsworth created Alice Fell and Lucy Gray, or breathed the lines beginning,

"She was a phantom of delight,"

and there were books for the young before Mr. Day wrote Sandford and Merton; especially is it to be noted that Goldsmith, who was an *avant-courier* of Wordsworth, had a very delightful perception of the child, and amused himself with him in the Vicar of Wakefield, while he or his double entertained his little friends in real life with the Renowned History of Goody Two Shoes.

Nevertheless, there has been, since the day of Wordsworth, such a succession of childish figures in prose and verse that we are justified in believing childhood to have been discovered at the close of the last century. The child has now become so common that we scarcely consider how absent he is from the earlier literature. Men and women are there, lovers, maidens, and youth, but these are all with us still. The child has been added to the *dramatis personæ* of modern literature.

There is a correlation between childhood in literature and a literature for children, but it will best be understood when one has considered the meaning of the appearance and disappearance of the child in different epochs of literature and art; for while a hasty survey certainly assures one that the nineteenth century regards childhood far more intently than any previous age, it is impossible that so elemental a figure as the child should ever have been wholly lost to sight. A comparison of literatures with reference to this figure may disclose some of the fundamental differences which exist between this century and those which have preceded it; it may also disclose a still

deeper note of unity, struck by the essential spirit in childhood itself. It is not worth while in such a study to have much recourse to the minor masters; if a theme so elemental and so universal in its relations is not to be illustrated from the great creative expositors of human nature, it cannot have the importance which we claim for it.

II

IN GREEK AND ROMAN LITERATURE

I

WHEN Dr. Schliemann with his little shovel uncovered the treasures of Mycenæ and Ilium, a good many timid souls rejoiced exceedingly over a convincing proof of the authenticity of the Homeric legends. There always will be those who find the proof of a spiritual fact in some corresponding material fact; who wish to see the bones of Agamemnon before they are quite ready to believe in the Agamemnon of the Iliad; to whom the Bible is not true until its truth has been confirmed by some external witness. But when science has done its utmost, there still remains in a work of art a certain testimony to truth, which may be illustrated by science, but cannot be superseded by it. Agamemnon has lived all these years in the belief of men without the aid of any cups, or saucers, or golden vessels, or even bones. Literature, and especially imaginative lit-

erature, is the exponent of the life of a people, and we must still go to it for our most intimate knowledge. No careful antiquarian research can reproduce for us the women of early Greece as Homer has set them before us in a few lines in his pictures of Helen and Penelope and Nausikaä. When, therefore, we ask ourselves of childhood in Greek life, we may reconstruct it out of the multitudinous references in Greek literature to the education of children, to their sports and games; and it is no very difficult task to follow the child from birth through the nursery to the time when it assumes its place in the active community: but the main inquiries must still be, What pictures have we of childhood? What part does the child play in that drama which is set before us in a microcosm by poets and tragedians?

The actions of Homer's heroes are spiritualized by reflection. That is, as the tree which meets the eye becomes a spiritual tree when one sees its answering image in the pool which it overhangs, so those likenesses which Homer sets over against the deeds of his heroes release the souls of the deeds, and give them wings for a flight in the imagi-

nation. A crowd of men flock to the assembly: seen in the bright reflection of Homer's imagination, they are a swarm of bees: —

"Being abroad, the earth was overlaid
With flockers to them, that came forth, as when of frequent bees
Swarms rise out of a hollow rock, repairing the degrees
Of their egression endlessly, with ever rising new
From forth their sweet nest; as their store, still as it faded, grew,
And never would cease sending forth her clusters to the spring,
They still crowd out so; this flock here, that there, belaboring
The loaded flowers." [1]

So Chapman, in his Gothic fashion, running up his little spires and pinnacles upon the building which he has raised from Homer's material; but the idea is all Homer's, and Chapman's "repairing the degrees of their egression endlessly," with its resonant hum, is hardly more intentionally a reflex of sound and motion than Homer's *αἰεὶ νέον ἐρχομενάων*.

We look again at Chapman's way of rendering the caressing little passage in the fourth book of the Iliad, where Homer, wishing to speak of the ease and tenderness

[1] Chapman's *The Iliads of Homer*, ii. 70–77.

with which Athene turns aside the arrow shot at Menelaos, calls up the image of a mother brushing a fly from the face of her sleeping child: —

"Stood close before, and slack'd the force the arrow did confer
With as much care and little hurt as doth a mother use,
And keep off from her babe, when sleep doth through his powers diffuse
His golden humor, and th' assaults of rude and busy flies
She still checks with her careful hand." [1]

Here the Englishman has caught the notion of ease, and emphasized that; yet he has missed the tenderness, and all because he was not content to accept the simple image, but must needs refract it into "assaults of rude and busy flies." Better is the rendering of the picturesque figure in which Ajax, beset by the Trojans, is likened to an ass belabored by a pack of boys: —

"As when a dull mill ass comes near a goodly field of corn,
Kept from the birds by children's cries, the boys are overborne
By his insensible approach, and simply he will eat
About whom many wands are broke, and still the children beat,

[1] *Iliads*, iv. 147–151.

And still the self-providing ass doth with their weakness bear,
Not stirring till his paunch be full, and scarcely then will steer." [1]

Apollo, sweeping away the rampart of the Greeks, does it as easily as a boy, who has heaped a pile of sand upon the seashore in childish sport, in sport razes it with feet and hands. Achilles half pities, half chides, the imploring, weeping Patroclos, when he says, —

"Wherefore weeps my friend
So like a girl, who, though she sees her mother cannot tend
Her childish humors, hangs on her, and would be taken up,
Still viewing her with tear-drowned eyes, when she has made her stoop." [2]

Chapman's "hangs on her" is hardly so particular as Homer's εἱανοῦ ἀπτομένη, plucks at her gown; and he has quite missed the picture offered by the poet, who makes the child, as soon as she discovers her mother, beg to be taken up, and insistently stop her as she goes by on some errand. Here again the naïve domestic scene in Homer is charged in Chapman with a certain half-tragic meaning.

This, we think, completes the short cata-

[1] *Iliads*, xvi. 5–8. [2] *Ibid.* xi. 485–490.

logue of Homer's indirect reference to childhood, and the comparison with the Elizabethan poet's use of the same forms brings out more distinctly the sweet simplicity and native dignity of the Greek. When childhood is thus referred to by Homer, it is used with no condescension, and with no thought of investing it with any adventitious property. It is a part of nature, as the bees are a part of nature; and when Achilles likens his friend in his tears to a little girl wishing to be taken up by her mother, he is not taunting him with being a "cry-baby."

Leaving the indirect references, one recalls immediately the single picture of childhood which stands among the heroic scenes of the Iliad. When Hector has his memorable parting with Andromache, as related in the sixth book of the Iliad, the child Astyanax is present in the nurse's arms. Here Chapman is so careless that we desert him, and fall back on a simple rendering into prose of the passage relating to the child: —

"With this, famous Hector reached forth to take his boy, but back into the bosom of his fair-girded nurse the boy shrank with a cry, frightened at the sight of his dear

father; for he was afraid of the brass, — yes, and of the plume made of a horse's mane, when he saw it nodding dreadfully at the helmet's peak. Then out laughed his dear father and his noble mother. Quick from his head famous Hector took the helmet and laid it on the ground, where it shone. Then he kissed his dear son and tossed him in the air, and thus he prayed to Zeus and all the gods. . . . These were his words, and so he placed the boy, his boy, in the hands of his dear wife; and she received him into her odorous bosom, smiling through her tears. Her husband had compassion on her when he saw it, and stroked her with his hand, spoke to her, and called her by her name." [1]

Like so many other passages in Homer, this at once offers themes for sculpture. Flaxman was right when he presented his series of illustrations to the Iliad and Odyssey in outline, and gave a statuesque character to the groups, though his interpretation of this special scene is commonplace. There is an elemental property about the life exhibited in Homer which the firm boundaries of sculpture most fitly

[1] *Iliad*, vi. 466–475, 482–485.

inclose. Thus childhood, in this passage, is characterized by an entirely simple emotion, — the sudden fear of an infant at the sight of his father's shining helmet and frowning plume; while the relation of maturity to childhood is presented in the strong man's concession to weakness, as he laughs and lays aside his helmet, and then catches and tosses the child.

It is somewhat perilous to comment upon Homer. The appeal in his poetry is so direct to universal feeling, and so free from the entanglements of a too refined sensibility, that the moment one begins to enlarge upon the sentiment in his epic one is in danger of importing into it subtleties which would have been incomprehensible to Homer. There is preserved, especially in the Iliad, the picture of a society which is physically developed, but intellectually unrefined. The men weep like children when they cannot have what they want, and the passions which stir life are those which lie nearest the physical forms of expression. When we come thus upon this picture of Hector's parting with Andromache, we are impressed chiefly with the fact that it is human life in outline. Here are great facts of human experience,

and they are so told that not one of them requires a word of explanation to make it intelligible to a child. The child, we are reminded in a later philosophy, is father of the man, and Astyanax is a miniature Hector; for we have only to go forward a few pages to find Hector, when brought face to face with Ajax, confessing to a terrible thumping of fear in his breast.

There is one figure in early Greek domestic life which has frequent recognition in literature. It helps in our study of this subject to find the nurse so conspicuous; in the passage last quoted she is given an epithet which is reserved for goddesses and noble women. The definite regard paid to one so identified with childhood is in accord with the open acceptance of the physical aspect of human nature which is at the basis of the Homeric poems. The frankness with which the elemental conditions of life are made to serve the poet's purpose, so that eating and drinking, sleeping and fighting, weeping and laughing, running and dancing, are familiar incidents of the poem, finds a place for the nurse and the house-dog. Few incidents in the Odyssey are better remembered by its readers than the recognition of the travel-

worn Odysseus by the old watch-dog, and by the nurse who washes the hero's feet and discovers the scar of the wound made by the boar's tusk when the man before her was a youth.

The child, in the Homeric conception, was a little human creature uninvested with any mystery, a part of that society which had itself scarcely passed beyond the bounds of childhood. As the horizon which limited early Greece was a narrow one, and the world in which the heroes moved was surrounded by a vast *terra incognita*, so human life, in its Homeric acceptance, was one of simple forms; that which lay beyond tangible and visible experience was rarely visited, and was peopled with shapes which brought a childish fright. There was, in a word, nothing in the development of man's nature, as recorded by Homer, which would make him look with questioning toward his child. He regarded the world about him with scarcely more mature thought than did the infant whom he tossed in the air, and, until life should be apprehended in its more complex relations, he was not likely to see in his child anything more than an epitome of his own little round. The contrast be-

tween childhood and manhood was too faint to serve much of a purpose in art.

The difference between Homer and the tragedians is at once perceived to be the difference between a boy's thought and a man's thought. The colonial growth, the Persian war, the political development, the commerce with other peoples, were witnesses to a more complex life and the quick causes of a profounder apprehension of human existence. It happens that we have in the Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles an incident which offers a suggestive comparison with the simple picture of the parting of Hector and Andromache. In the earlier poem, the hero, expecting the fortunes of war, disdains all suggestions of prudence, and speaks as a brave man must, who sets honor above ease, and counts the cost of sacrifice only to stir himself to greater courage and resolution. He asks that his child may take his place in time, and he dries his wife's tears with the simple words that no man can separate him from her, that fate alone can intervene; in Chapman's nervous rendering: —

> "Afflict me not, dear wife,
> With these vain griefs. He doth not live that can
> disjoin my life

And this firm bosom but my fate; and fate, whose wings can fly?
Noble, ignoble, fate controls. Once born, the best must die."

Here, the impending disaster to Troy, with the inclusion of Hector's fortune, appears as one fact out of many, an incident in life, bringing other incidents in its train, yet scarcely more ethical in its relations than if it followed from the throw of dice. In the Œdipus, when the king, overwhelmed by his fate, in the supreme hour of his anguish takes vengeance upon his eyes, there follows a passage of surpassing pathos. To the mad violence has succeeded a moment of tender grief, and the unhappy Œdipus stretches out his arms for his children, that he may bid them farewell. His own terrible fate is dimmed in his thought by the suffering which the inevitable curse of the house is to bring into their lives. He reflects; he dismisses his sons, — they, at least, can fight their battles in the world; he turns to his defenseless little daughters, and pours out for them the tears of a stricken father. The not-to-be-questioned fate of Homer, an inexplicable incident of life, which men must set aside from calculation and thought

because it is inexplicable, has become in Sophocles a terrible mystery, connecting itself with man's conduct, even when that is unwittingly in violation of divine decree, and following him with such unrelenting vigilance that death cannot be counted the end of perilous life. The child, in the supreme moment of Hector's destiny, is to him the restoration of order, the replacement of his loss; the children, in the supreme moment of the destiny of Œdipus, are to him only the means of prolonging and rendering more murky the darkness which has fallen upon him. Hector, looking upon Astyanax, sees the world rolling on, sunlight chasing shadow, repeating the life he has known; Œdipus, looking upon Antigone and Ismene, sees new disclosures of the possibilities of a dread power under which the world is abiding.

In taking one step more from Sophocles to Euripides, there is food for thought in a new treatment of childhood. Whatever view one may choose to take of Euripides and his art in its relation to the heroic tragedy, there can be no question as to the nearness in which Euripides stands to the characters of his dramas, and this nearness is shown

in nothing more than in the use which he makes of domestic life. With him, children are the necessary illustrations of humanity. Thus, in the Medea, when Medea is pleading with Creon for a respite of a day only from banishment, the argument which prevails is that which rests on pity for her little ones, and in the very centre of Medea's vengeance is that passion for her children which bids her slay them rather than leave them

> "Among their unfriends, to be trampled on."

Again, in Alkestis, the last words of the heroine before she goes to her sacrifice are a demand of Admetus that the integrity of their home shall be preserved, and no step-dame take her place with the children. Both Alkestis and Admetus, in that wonderful scene, are imaged to the eye as part of a group, and, though the children themselves do not speak, the words and the very gestures are directed toward them.

> *Alkestis.* My children, ye have heard your father's pledge
> Never to set a step-dame over you,
> Or thrust me from the allegiance of his heart.
> *Admetus.* What now I say shall never be unsaid.
> *Alkestis.* Then here our children I entrust to thee.

Admetus. And I receive them as the gage of love.
Alkestis. Be thou a mother to them in my place.
Admetus. Need were, when such a mother has been lost.
Alkestis. Children, I leave you when I fain would live.
Admetus. Alas! what shall I do, bereft of thee?
Alkestis. Time will assuage thy grief: the dead are nought.
Admetus. Take, take me with thee to the underworld.
Alkestis. It is enough that I must die for thee.
Admetus. O Heaven! of what a partner I am reft!
Alkestis. My eyes grow dim and the long sleep comes on.
Admetus. I too am lost if thou dost leave me, wife.
Alkestis. Think of me as of one that is no more.
Admetus. Lift up thy face, quit not thy children dear.
Alkestis. Not willingly; but, children, fare ye well.
Admetus. Oh, look upon them, look!
Alkestis. My end is come.
Admetus. Oh, leave us not.
Alkestis. Farewell.
Admetus. I am undone.
Chorus. Gone, gone; thy wife, Admetus, is no more.[1]

A fragment of Danaë puts into the mouth of Danaë herself apparently lines which send one naturally to Simonides: —

"He, leaping to my arms and in my bosom,
Might haply sport, and with a crowd of kisses
Might win my soul forth; for there is no greater
Love-charm than close companionship, my father."[2]

It cannot have escaped notice how large a

[1] Goldwin Smith's translation.
[2] John Addington Symonds's translation.

part is played by children in the spectacular appointments of the Greek drama. Those symbolic processions, those groups of human life, those scenes of human passion, are rendered more complete by the silent presence of children. They serve in the temples; their eyes are quick to catch the coming of the messenger; they suffer dumbly in the fate that pulls down royal houses and topples the pillars of ancestral palaces. It was impossible that it should be otherwise. The Greek mind, which found expression in tragic art, was oppressed by the problems, not alone of individual fate, but of the subtle relations of human life. The serpents winding about Laokoön entwined in their folds the shrinking youths, and the father's anguish was for the destiny which would not let him suffer alone. Yet there is scarcely a child's voice to be heard in the whole range of Greek poetic art. The conception is universally of the child, not as acting, far less as speaking, but as a passive member of the social order. It is not its individual life so much as its related life which is contemplated.

We are related to the Greeks not only through the higher forms of literature, but

through the political thought which had with them both historical development and speculative representation. It comes thus within the range of our inquiry to ask what recognition of childhood there was in writings which sought to give an artistic form to political thought. There is a frequent recurrence by Plato to the subject of childhood in the state, and we may see in his presentation not only the germinal relation which childhood bears, so that education becomes necessarily one of the significant functions of government, but also what may not unfairly be called a reflection of divinity.

The education which in the ideal state is to be given to children is represented by him, indeed, as the evolution from the sensations of pleasure and pain to the perception of virtue and vice. "Pleasure and pain," he says,[1] "I maintain to be the first perceptions of children, and I say that they are the forms under which virtue and vice are originally present to them. As to wisdom and true and fixed opinions, happy is the man who acquires them, even when declining in years; and he who possesses them,

[1] *Laws*, ii. 653. In this and subsequent passages Jowett's translation is used.

and the blessings which are contained in them, is a perfect man. Now I mean by education that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children; when pleasure and friendship and pain and hatred are rightly implanted in souls not yet capable of understanding the nature of them, and who find them, after they have attained reason, to be in harmony with her. This harmony of the soul, when perfected, is virtue; but the particular training in respect of pleasure and pain which leads you always to hate what you ought to hate, and love what you ought to love, from the beginning to the end, may be separated off, and, in my view, will be rightly called education."

In the Republic, Plato theorizes at great length upon a possible selection and training of children, which rests for its basis upon a too pronounced physical assumption, so that one in reading certain passages might easily fancy that he was considering the production of a superior breed of colts, and that the soul was the product of material forces only; but the fifth book, which contains these audacious speculations, may fairly be taken in the spirit in which Proudhon is

said to have thrown out some of his extravagant assertions, — he expected to be beaten down in his price.

There are other passages, especially in the Laws, in reading which one is struck by a certain reverence for childhood, as that interesting one where caution is given against disturbing the uniformity of children's plays on account of their connection with the life of the state. The modern theories of the Kindergarten find a notable support in Plato's reasoning: "I say that in states generally no one has observed that the plays of childhood have a great deal to do with the permanence or want of permanence in legislation. For when plays are ordered with a view to children having the same plays and amusing themselves after the same manner and finding delight in the same playthings, the more solemn institutions of the state are allowed to remain undisturbed. Whereas, if sports are disturbed and innovations are made in them, and they constantly change, and the young never speak of their having the same likings or the same established notions of good and bad taste, either in the bearing of their bodies or in their dress, but he who devises

something new and out of the way in figures and colors and the like is held in special honor, we may truly say that no greater evil can happen in a state; for he who changes the sports is secretly changing the manners of the young, and making the old to be dishonored among them, and the new to be honored. And I affirm that there is nothing which is a greater injury to all states than saying or thinking thus." [1]

It is, however, most germane to our purpose to cite a striking passage from the Laws, in which Plato most distinctly recognizes the power resident in childhood to assimilate the purest expression of truth. The Athenian, in the dialogue, is speaking, and says: "The next suggestion which I have to offer is that all our three choruses [that is, choruses representing the three epochs of life] shall sing to the young and tender souls of children, reciting in their strains all the noble thoughts of which we have already spoken, or are about to speak; and the sum of them shall be that the life which is by the gods deemed to be the happiest is the holiest, and we shall affirm this to be a most certain truth; and the minds of our young disciples

[1] *Laws*, vii. 797.

will be more likely to receive these words of ours than any others which we might address to them. . . .

"First will enter, in their natural order, the sacred choir, composed of children, which is to sing lustily the heaven-taught lay to the whole city. Next will follow the chorus of young men under the age of thirty, who will call upon the God Pæan to testify to the truth of their words, and will pray to him to be gracious to the youth and to turn their hearts. Thirdly, the choir of elder men, who are from thirty to sixty years of age, will also sing. There remain those who are too old to sing, and they will tell stories illustrating the same virtues, as with the voice of an oracle." [1]

Plato used human society as material from which to construct an organization artistically perfect and representing political order, just as Pheidias or Praxiteles used clay as a material from which to construct the human being artistically perfect and representing the soul of man. With this fine organism of the ideal state Plato incorporated his conception of childhood in its two relations of singing and being sung to. He thought

[1] *Laws*, ii. 664.

of the child as a member of the three-fold chorus of life: and when he set these choirs hymning the divine strain, he made the recipients of the revelation to be themselves children, the forming elements of the growing, organic state. Certainly it is a wide arc which is spanned by these three great representatives of Greek art, and in passing from Homer to Sophocles, and from Sophocles to Plato, we are not merely considering the epic, the tragic, and the philosophic treatment of childhood in literature; we are discovering the development of the conception of childhood in a nation which has communicated to history the eidolon of the fairest humanity. It is scarcely too much to speak of it as the evolution of a soul, and to find, as one so often finds in his study of Greece, the outline of the course of the world's thought.

The old, formal view of antiquity, which once placed Grecian life almost beyond the pale of our human sympathy, and made the men and women cold marble figures in our imagination, has given place to a warmer regard. Through literary reproduction, which paraphrases Greek life in the dramatic art of Browning and Fitzgerald,

gives us Spencerian versions of Homer, or, better still, the healthy childlike recital in Mr. Palmer's version of the Odyssey, and enables us to sit down after dinner with Plato, Mr. Jowett being an idiomatic interpreter; through the discoveries of Schliemann and others, by which the mythic and heroic ages of Greece are made almost grotesquely familiar, — we are coming to read Grecian history, in Niebuhr's felicitous phrase, as if it really happened, and to lay aside our artificial and distant ways of becoming familiar with Greek life. Yet the means which have led to this modern attitude toward classic antiquity are themselves the product of modern life; the secrets of Greek life are more open to us now because our own life has become freer, more hospitable, and more catholic. It is a delight to us to turn from the marble of Pheidias to the terra cotta of the unknown modelers of the Tanagra figurines, while these homelike, domestic images serve as interpreters, also, of the larger, nobler designs. So we have recourse to those fragments of the Greek Anthology which give us glimpses of Greek interiors, and by means of them we find a side-light thrown upon the more majestic expressions of poetic and dramatic art.

The Anthology gathers for us the epigrams, epitaphs, proverbs, fables, and little odds and ends which have been saved from the ruins of literature, and in turning its leaves one is impressed by the large number of references to childhood. It is as when, rambling through the streets of the uncovered Pompeii, one comes upon the playthings of children dead nigh two thousand years. Here are tender memorials of lost babes in inscriptions upon forgotten tombs, and laments of fathers and mothers for the darkness which has come upon their dwellings. We seem to hear the prattle of infancy and the mother's lullaby. The Greeks, as we, covered their loss with an instinctive trust in some better fortune in store for the child, and hushed their skepticism with the song of hope and the remembrance of stories which they had come in colder hours to disbelieve. Here, for example, is an anonymous elegy: —

"Thou hast not, O ruler Pluto, with pious intent, stolen for thy underground world a girl of five years, admired by all. For thou hast cut, as it were, from the root, a sweet-scented rose in the season of a commencing spring, before it had completed its proper

time. But come, Alexander and Philtatus; do not any longer weep and pour forth lamentations for the regretted girl. For she had, yes, she had a rosy face which meant that she should remain in the immortal dwellings of the sky. Trust, then, to stories of old. For it was not Death, but the Naiads, who stole the good girl as once they stole Hylas."[1]

Perhaps the most celebrated of these tender domestic passages is to be found in the oft-quoted lines from Simonides, where Danaë sings over the boy Perseus:—

"When in the ark of curious workmanship
The winds and swaying waters fearfully
Were rocking her, with streaming eyes, around
Her boy the mother threw her arms and said:

"'O darling, I am very miserable;
But thou art cosy-warm and sound asleep
In this thy dull, close-cabin'd prison-house,
Stretched at full ease in the dark, ebon gloom.
Over thy head of long and tangled hair
The wave is rolling; but thou heedest not;
Nor heedest thou the noises of the winds,
Wrapt in thy purple cloak, sweet pretty one.

"'But if this fearful place had fear for thee,
Those little ears would listen to my words;
But sleep on, baby, and let the sea-waves sleep,

[1] *Epigrammata Despota*, DCCXI.

And sleep our own immeasurable woes.
O father Zeus, I pray some change may come;
But, father, if my words are over-bold,
Have pity, and for the child's sake pardon me.' " [1]

II

As before we stopped in front of the charming group which Homer gives us in the parting of Hector and Andromache, with the child Astyanax set in the midst, so in taking the poet who occupies the chief place in Latin literature we find a significant contrast. The picture of Æneas bearing upon his shoulders the aged Anchises and leading by the hand the young Ascanius is a distinct Roman picture. The two poems move through somewhat parallel cycles, and have adventures which are common to both; but the figure of Odysseus is essentially a single figure, and his wanderings may easily be taken to typify the excursions of the human soul. Æneas, on the other hand, seems always the centre of a family group, and his journeyings always appear to be movements toward a final city and nation. The Greek idea of individuality and the Roman of relationship have signal illustra-

[1] D'Arcy W. Thompson, in his *Ancient Leaves*.

tion in these poems. Throughout the Æneid the figure of Ascanius is an important one. There is a nice disclosure of growth in personality, and one is aware that the grandson is coming forward into his place as a member of the family, to be thereafter representative. The poet never loses sight of the boy's future. Homer, in his shield of Achilles, that microcosm of human life, forgets to make room for children. Virgil, in his prophetic shield, shows the long triumphs from Ascanius down, and casts a light upon the cave wherein the twin boys were suckled by the wolf. One of the most interesting episodes in the Æneid is the childhood of Camilla, in which the warrior maid's nature is carried back and reproduced in diminutive form. The evolutions of the boys in the fifth book, while full of boyish life, come rather under the form of mimic soldiery than of spontaneous youth. In one of the Eclogues, Virgil has a graceful suggestion of the stature of a child by its ability to reach only the lowest branches of a tree.

Childhood, in Roman literature, is not contemplated as a fine revelation of nature. In the grosser conception, children are reckoned as scarcely more than cubs; but with

the strong hold which the family idea had upon the Roman mind, it was impossible that in the refinement which came gradually upon life childhood should not play a part of its own in poetry, and come to represent the more spiritual side of the family life. Thus Catullus, in one of his nuptial odes, has a charming picture of infancy awaking into consciousness and affection: —

"Soon my eyes shall see, mayhap,
Young Torquatus on the lap
Of his mother, as he stands
Stretching out his tiny hands,
And his little lips the while
Half open on his father's smile.

"And oh! may he in all be like
Manlius, his sire, and strike
Strangers when the boy they meet
As his father's counterfeit,
And his face the index be
Of his mother's chastity." [1]

The epitaphs and the elegies of the Greek Anthology have their counterpart in Latin. Mr. Thompson has tried his hand at a passage from Statius: [2] —

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

Shall I not mourn thee, darling boy? with whom,
Childless I missed not children of my own;
I, who first caught and pressed thee to my breast,

[1] Theodore Martin's translation.

[2] *Silvæ*, v. 5, 79–87.

And called thee mine, and taught thee sounds and words,
And solved the riddle of thy murmurings,
And stoop'd to catch thee creeping on the ground,
And propp'd thy steps, and ever had my lap
Ready, if drowsy were those little eyes,
To rock them with a lullaby to sleep;
Thy first word was my name, thy fun my smile,
And not a joy of thine but came from me.

There is, too, that epitaph of Martial on the little girl Erotion, closing with the lines which may possibly have been in Gray's mind when he wrote the discarded verse of his Elegy, Englished thus: —

> "Let not the sod too stiffly stretch its girth
> Above those tender limbs, erstwhile so free;
> Press lightly on her form, dear Mother Earth,
> Her little footsteps lightly fell on thee."[1]

In the literature which sounds the deeper waters of life, we find references to childhood; but the child rarely, if ever, draws the thought outside of the confines of this world. As near an approach as any to a perception of the mystery of childhood is in a passage in Lucretius, where the poet looks down with compassion upon the new-born infant as one of the mysteries of nature: "Moreover, the babe, like a sailor cast ashore by the cruel waves, lies naked on the

[1] Contributors' Club, *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1881.

ground, speechless, in need of every aid to life when first nature has cast him forth by great throes from his mother's womb, and he fills the air with his piteous wail, as befits one whose doom it is to pass through so much misery in life." [1] Lucretius displayed a profound reverence for human affection. Scattered through his great poem are fine lines in which childhood appears. "Soon," he says, in one mournful passage, — "soon shall thy home receive thee no more with glad welcome, nor thy dear children run to snatch thy first kiss, touching thy heart with silent gladness." [2]

Juvenal, with the thought of youth as the possible restoration of a sinking world, utters a cry, which has often been taken up by sensualists even, when he injects into his pitiless satire the solemn words, "the greatest reverence is due to the boy." [3]

Any survey of ancient Greek and Roman life would be incomplete which left out of view the supernatural element. We need not inquire whether there was a conscious

[1] *De Rerum Natura*, V. 222–227, cited in Sellar's *The Roman Poets of the Republic*, p. 396.

[2] *Ibid.* III. 894–896. Sellar, p. 364.

[3] *Satire* xiv. 47.

materialization of spiritual forces, or an idealization of physical phenomena. We have simply to do with certain shapes and figures which dwelt in the mind and formed a part of its furniture; coming and going like shadows, yet like shadows confessing a forming substance; embodying belief and symbolizing moods. In that overarching and surrounding world, peopled by the countless personages of Greek and Roman supernaturalism, we may discover, if we will, a vague, distorted, yet sometimes transcendent reflection of the life which men and women were living upon the more palpable and tangible earth.

What, then, has the childhood of the gods to tell us? We have the playful incident of Hermes, or Mercurius, getting out of his cradle to steal the oxen of Admetos, and the similar one of Herakles strangling the snakes that attacked him just after his birth; but these are simply stories intended to carry back into childhood the strength of the one and the cunning of the other. It is more to our purpose to note the presence in the Pantheon of the child who remains always a child, and is known to us familiarly as Eros, or Cupid, or Amor. It is true that the myth

includes the union of Cupid and Psyche; nevertheless, the prevailing conception is of a boy, winged, armed with bow and arrows, the son and messenger of Venus. It may be said that the myth gradually adapted itself to this form, which is not especially apparent in the earlier stories. The figure of Love, as thus presented, has been more completely adopted into modern poetry than any other in the old mythology, and it cannot be said that its characteristics have been materially altered. It is doubtful whether the ancient idea was more simple than the same when reproduced in Thorwaldsen's sculpture, or in Ben Jonson's Venus' Runaway. The central conception is essentially an unmoral one; it knows not right or wrong, good or evil; the mischief-making is capricious, and not malicious. There is the idea only of delight, of an innocence which is untutored, of a will which is the wind's will. It would seem as if, in fastening upon childhood as the embodiment of love, the ancients, as well as their modern heirs, were bent upon ridding life of conscience and fate, — upon making love to have neither memory nor foresight, but only the joy of the moment. This sporting child was a

refuge, in their minds, from the ills of life, a residence of the one central joy of the world. There is an infinite pathos in the erection of childhood into a temple for the worship of Love. There was, indeed, in the reception of this myth, a wide range from purity to grossness, as the word "love" itself has to do service along an arc which subtends heaven and hell; but when we distill the poetry and art which gather about the myth of Cupid, the essence will be found in this conception of love as a child, — a conception never wholly lost, even when the child was robbed of the purity which we recognize as its ideal property. It should be noted, also, that the Romans laid hold of this idea more eagerly than did the Greeks; for the child itself, though more artistically set forth in Greek literature, appears as a more vital force in Roman literature.[1]

[1] A thoughtful writer in *The Spectator*, 3 September, 1887, notes the absence of representations of childhood in ancient art and literature, and the following number of the journal contains a note of protest from Mr. Alfred Austin, in which he says pertinently: "Is it not the foible of modern art, if I may use a homely expression, to make a fuss over what it feels, or wants others to feel, whereas an older and a nobler art, which is by no means extinct among us, prefers to indicate emotion rather than to dwell on it?"

III

IN HEBREW LIFE AND LITERATURE

THE literature of Greece and Rome is a possession of the modern world. For the most part it has been taken as an independent creation, studied indeed with reference to language as the vehicle of thought, but after all chiefly as an art. It is within a comparatively recent time that the conception of an historical study of literature has been prominent, and that men have gone to Greek and Roman poetry with an eager passion for the discovery of ancient life. The result of these new methods has been to humanize our conception of the literature under examination.

Singularly enough, while the modern world has been influenced by the classic world chiefly through its language, literature, and institutions, the third great stream of influence which has issued from ancient sources has been one in which literature as such has been almost subordinated to the

religious and ethical ideas of which it was the vehicle; even the strong institutional forces inherent in it have had only exceptional attention. There was a time, indeed, when the history of the Jews, as contained in the books of the Old Testament, was isolated from the history of mankind and treated in an artificial manner, at its best made to illustrate conduct, somewhat as Latin literature was made to exemplify syntax. The old distinction of sacred and profane history did much to obscure the human element in what was called sacred history, and to blot out the divine element in what was called profane history. There are many who can remember the impression made upon their minds when they learned for the first time of the contemporaneousness of events in Jewish and Grecian history; and it is not impossible that some can even recall a period in their lives when Bible people and the Bible lands were almost as distinct and separate in their conception as if they belonged to another planet.

Nevertheless, the reality of Old Testament history, while suffering from lack of proportion in relation to other parts of human history, has been impressed upon modern civil-

ization through its close identification with the religious life. The inheritance of these scriptures of the ancient Hebrew has been so complete that the modern Jew is regarded almost as a pretender when he sets up a claim to special possession. We jostle him out of the way, and appropriate his national documents as the old title-deeds of Christianity. There is, indeed, an historic truth involved in this; but, however we may regard it, we are brought back to the significant fact that along with the Greek and the Roman influence upon modern life has been the mighty force of Hebraism. The Greek has impressed himself upon our modes and processes of thought, the Roman upon our organization, the Hebrew upon our religious and social life.[1]

It is certain that the Bible has been a storehouse from which have been drawn illustrations of life and character, and that these have had an authority beyond anything in classic history and literature. It has been the book from which youth with us has drawn its conceptions of life outside of

[1] See an interesting statement of this Biblical force in the preface to Matthew Arnold's *The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration*, London, 1872.

the limited circle of human experience; and the geographical, historical, and archæological apparatus employed to illustrate it has been far more considerable than any like apparatus in classical study. The Bible has been the university to the person of ordinary culture; it has brought into his life a foreign element which Greece and Rome have been powerless to present; and though the images of this remote foreign life often have been distorted, and strangely mingled with familiar notions, there can be no doubt that the mind has been enlarged by this extension of its interests and knowledge.

It is worth while, therefore, to ask what conceptions of childhood are discoverable in the Old Testament literature. The actual appearances of children in the narrative portions are not frequent. We have the incident of the exposure of Moses as a babe in the bulrushes; the sickness and death of Bathsheba's child, with the pathetic story of the erring father's fasting and prayer; the expulsion of Ishmael; the childhood of Samuel in the temple; the striking narrative of the restoration of the son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah; and the still more graphic and picturesque description

of the bringing back to life by Elisha of the child who had been born at his intercession to the Shunamite, and had been sunstruck when in the field with his father. Then there is the abrupt and hard to be explained narrative of the jeering boys who followed the prophet Elisha with derisive cries, as they saw how different he was in external appearance from the rugged and awe-inspiring Elijah. Whatever may be the interpretation of the fearful retribution which befell those rude boys, and the indication which was shown of the majesty of the prophetic office, it is clear that the Jew of that day would not have felt any disproportion between the guilt of the boys and their dire and speedy punishment; he would have been impressed by the sanctity of the prophet, and the swiftness of the divine demonstration. Life and death were nothing before the integrity of the divine ideal, and the complete subordination of children to the will of their parents accustomed the mind to an easy assent to the exhibition of what seems to us almost arbitrary will.

No attentive reader of the Old Testament has failed to remark the prominence given to the preservation of the family succession,

and to the birth of male children. That laugh of Sarah — at first of scorn, then of triumph — sounds out from the early records with a strange, prophetic voice; and one reads the thirtieth chapter of the book of Genesis with a sense of the wild, passionate rivalry of the two wives of Jacob, as they bring forth, one after another, the twelve sons of the patriarch. The burst of praise also from Hannah, when she was freed from her bitter shame and had brought forth her son Samuel, has its echo through history and psalm and prophecy until it issues in the clear, bell-like tones of the Magnificat, thenceforward to be the hymn of triumph of the Christian church. The voice of God, as it uttered itself in commandment and prophetic warning, was for children and children's children to the latest generation. It is not the person so much as the family that is addressed, and the strongest warnings, the brightest promises to the fathers, are through the children. The prophet Hosea could use no more terrible word to the people than when, speaking as the mouthpiece of God, he says: "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children;" [1] and Zechariah, in-

[1] *Hosea* iv. 6.

spiriting the people, declares: "They shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children."[1] The promise of the golden age of peace and prosperity has its climax in the innocence of childhood. "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof;"[2] while the lofty anticipation of Isaiah, in words which still serve as symbols of hopeful humanity, reaches its height in the prediction of a profound peace among the very brutes, when the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf, the young lion, and the fatling shall not only lay aside their mutual hate and fear, but shall be obedient to the tender voice and gentle hand of a little child, and even the noxious reptiles shall be playmates for the infant.[3] In the Greek fable, Hercules in his cradle strangled the snakes by his might; in the Jewish picture, the child enters fearlessly the very dens of the asp and the adder, secure under the reign of a perfect righteousness.

[1] *Zech.* x. 9. [2] *Zech.* viii. 4. 5. [3] *Isa.* xi. 6–8.

Milton, in his Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, has pointed out this parallel: —

"He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
Our babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnëd crew."

To the Jew, childhood was the sign of fulfillment of glorious promises. The burden of psalm and prophecy was of a golden age to come, not of one that was in the dim past. A nation is kept alive, not by memory, but by hope. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob was the God of a procession of generations, a God of sons and of sons' sons; and when we read, in the last words of the last canonical book of the Old Testament, that "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,"[1] we are prepared for the opening, four centuries later, of the last chapter in the ancient history of this people. In the adoration there of the child we seem to see the concentration of Jewish hope

[1] *Malachi* iv. 6.

which had for centuries found expression in numberless ways. The Magnificat of Mary is the song of Hannah, purified and ennobled by generations of deferred hope, and in all the joy and prophecy of the shepherds, of Simeon and of Anna, we listen to strains which have a familiar sound. It is indeed the expectation of what this child will be and do which moves the pious souls about it, but there is a direct veneration of the babe as containing the hope of the people. In this supreme moment of the Jewish nation, age bows itself reverently before childhood, and we are able by the light which the event throws backward to perceive more clearly how great was the power of childhood, through all the earlier periods, in its influence upon the imagination and reason. We may fairly contend that the apprehension of the sanctity of childhood was more positive with the Jew than with either the Greek or the Roman.

It remains, however, that this third great stream of humanity passes out, in the New Testament, from its Hebraic limitations, and we are unable, except by a special effort, to think of it as Jewish at all. The Gospels transcend national and local and temporal

limits, and we find ourselves, when considering them, reading the beginnings of modern, not the close of Jewish history. The incidents lying along the margin of the Gospels and relating to the birth of the Christ do, as we have seen, connect themselves with the earlier national development, but the strong light which comes at the dawn of Christianity inevitably draws the mind forward to the new day.

The evangelists record no incidents of the childhood of Jesus which separate it from the childhood of other of the children of men. The flight into Egypt is the flight of parents with a child; the presence of the boy in the temple is marked by no abnormal sign, for it is a distorted imagination which has given the unbiblical title to the scene, — Christ disputing with the Doctors, or Christ teaching in the Temple. But as the narrative of the Saviour's ministry proceeds, we are reminded again and again of the presence of children in the multitudes that flocked about him. The signs and wonders which he wrought were more than once through the lives of the young, and the suffering and disease of humanity which form the background in the Gospels upon which we

see sketched in lines of light the outline of the redeeming Son of Man are shown in the persons of children, while the deeper life of humanity is disclosed in the tenderness of parents. It is in the Gospels that we have those vignettes of human life, — the healing of the daughter of Jairus, the delivery of the boy possessed with devils, that striking antithesis to the transfiguration which Raphael's genius has served to fix in the mind, the healing of the nobleman's son, and the blessing of children brought to the Master by their fond mothers. Most notable, too, is the scene of the final entry into Jerusalem, when the Saviour appeared to accept from children the tribute which he shunned when it came from their elders.

Here, as in other cases, we ask what was the attitude of the Saviour toward children, since the literature of the New Testament is so confessedly a revelation of life and character that we instinctively refuse to treat it otherwise. In vain do we listen to those who point out the ethical beauty of the Sermon on the Mount, or the pathos of this or that incident; our minds break through all considerations of style and form, to seize upon the facts and truths in their relation to

life. We do not ask, what is the representation of childhood to be found in the writings of certain Jews known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; we ask, what is there between children and the central figure disclosed in those writings. We ask purposely, for, when we leave behind this ancient world, we enter upon the examination of literature and art which are never beyond the horizon lying under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. The attitude which Christ took toward children must contain the explanation of the attitude which Christianity takes toward the same, for the literature and art of Christendom become the exponents of the conception had of the Christ.

There are two or three significant words and acts which leave us in no doubt as to the general aspect which childhood wore to Jesus Christ. In the conversation which he held with the intellectual Nicodemus, he asserted the necessity of a new birth for mankind; in the rite of baptism he symbolized the same truth; he expanded this word again, accompanying it by a symbolic act, when he placed a child in the midst of his disciples and bade them begin life over again; he illustrated the truth by an acted

parable, when he called little children to him with the words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" he turned from the hard, skeptical men of that generation with the words of profound relief: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" he symbolized the charity of life in the gift of a cup of cold water to a child.

The eyes of this Jesus, the Saviour of men, were ever upon the new heavens and the new earth. The kingdom of heaven was the burden of his announcement; the new life which was to come to men shone most plainly in the persons of young children. Not only were the babes whom he saw and blessed to partake of the first entrance into the kingdom of the spirit, but childhood possessed in his sight the potency of the new world; it was under the protection of a father and mother; it was fearless and trusting; it was unconscious of self; it lived and did not think about living. The words of prophets and psalmists had again and again found in the throes of a woman in labor a symbol of the struggle of humanity for a new generation. By a bold and

profound figure it was said of the great central person of humanity: "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." A foregleam of that satisfaction is found in his face as he gazes upon the children who are brought to him. There is sorrow as he gazes upon the world, and his face is set toward Jerusalem; there is a calm joy as he places a child before him and sees in his young innocence the promise of the kingdom of heaven; there is triumph in his voice as he rebukes the men who would fain shut the mouths of the shouting children that run before him.

The pregnant words which Jesus Christ used regarding childhood, the new birth, and the kingdom of heaven become indicative of the great movements in life and literature and art from that day to this. The successive gestations of history have their tokens in some specific regard of childhood. There have been three such periods, so mighty that they mark each the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth. The first was the genesis of the Christian church; the second was the Renaissance; the third had its great sign in the French Revolution.

IV

IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

THE parabolic expression, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," has been applied with force to the destruction of Judaism, and the reconstruction upon its ruins of a living Christianity. It may be applied with equal justice, though in more recondite sense, to the death of the old literature and art, and the resurrection of the beautiful creations of the human mind in new form. The three days were more than a thousand years, and during that long sleep what had become of those indestructible forces of imagination and reason which combine in literature and art? Roughly speaking, they were disjoined, and only when reunited did they again assert themselves in living form. The power which kept each in abeyance was structural Christianity, and only when that began to be burst asunder by the vital force inherent in spiritual Christianity was there opportu-

nity for the free union of the imagination and reason. As the Jewish temple could no longer inclose divinity, but was thrust apart by the expansive power of the Christianity which was fostered within it, so the Christian church, viewed as an institution which aimed at an inclosure of humanity, was in its turn disrupted by the silent growth of the human spirit which had fed within its walls upon the divine life. After the birth of Christianity the parallel continuity of the old world was broken. The Greek, the Roman, and the Hebrew no longer carried forward their separate movements. Christianity, professing to annul these forces, had taken their place in history. Again, at the Renaissance, it was found that the three great streams of human thought had been flowing underground; they reissued to the light in a generous flood, each combining with the others.

It was during this long period of apparent inaction in literature and art that the imagination, dissevered from reason, was in a state of abnormal activity. The compression of its field caused the faculty to find expression through forms which were very closely connected with the dominant sphere of

human life. Before religious art and ecclesiastical architecture had become the abundant expression of Christian imagination, there was generated a great mass of legend and fable, which only by degrees became formally embodied in literature or perpetuated in art and symbol. The imaginative faculty had given it, for material in which to work the new life, the soul of man as distinctly related to God. An ethical principle lay at the foundation of Christianity, and the imagination, stimulated by faith, built with materials drawn from ethical life. The germinal truth of Christianity, that God had manifested himself to men in the person of Jesus Christ, however it might be obscured or misunderstood, was the efficient cause of the operations of the Christian imagination. This faculty set before itself the perfect man, and in that conceived not the physical and intellectual man of the Greek conception, nor the Cæsar of the Roman ideal, nor even the moral man of the Jewish light, but a man whose perfection was the counterpart of the perfection of God and its great exemplar, the man Jesus Christ. In his life the central idea of service, of victory through suffering and humil-

iation, of self-surrender, and of union with God was perceived with greater or less clearness, and this idea was adumbrated in that vast gallery of saints constructed by Christianity in its ceaseless endeavor to reproduce the perfect type. Through all the extravagance and chaotic confusion of the legendary lore of the mediæval church, one may discover the perpetually recurring notes of the perfect life. The beatitudes — those spiritual witnesses of the redeemed human character — are ever floating before the early imagination, and offering the standards by which it measures its creations. It was by no fortuitous suggestion, but by a profound sense of fitness, that the church made the gospel of All Saints' Day to consist of those sentences which pronounce the blessedness of the poor in spirit, the meek, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake; while the epistle for the same day is the roll-call of the saints who are to sit on the thrones of the twelve tribes, and of the multitudes who have overcome the world.

It is not strange, therefore, that the imagination, busying itself about the spiritual life of man, should have dwelt with special emphasis upon those signs of the new life

brought to light in the Gospels, which seemed to contain the promise of perfection. It seized upon baptism as witnessing to a regeneration; it traced the lives of saints back to a childhood which began with baptism; it invested the weak things of the world with a mighty power; and, keeping before it the pattern of the Head of the church, it traced in the early life of the Saviour powers which confounded the common wisdom of men. It dwelt with fondness upon the adoration of the Magi, as witnessing to the supremacy of the infant Redeemer; and, occupied as it was with the idea of a suffering Saviour, it carried the cross back to the cradle, and found in the Massacre of the Innocents the type of a substitution and vicarious sacrifice.

The simple annals of the Gospels shine with great beauty when confronted by the ingenuity and curious adornment of the legends included in the so-called Apocryphal Gospels. Yet these legends illustrate the eagerness of the early Christian world to invest the person of Jesus with every possible charm and power; and since the weakness of infancy and childhood offers the strongest contrast to works of thaumaturgy, this period is

very fully elaborated. A reason may also be found in the silence of the evangelists, which needed to be broken by the curious. Thus, when, in the flight into Egypt, the Holy Family was made to seek rest in a cave, there suddenly came out many dragons; and the children who were with the family, when they saw the dragons, cried out in great terror.

"Then Jesus," says the narrative, "went down from the bosom of his mother, and stood on his feet before the dragons; and they adored Jesus, and thereafter retired. . . . And the young child Jesus, walking before them, commanded them to hurt no man. But Mary and Joseph were very much afraid lest the child should be hurt by the dragons. And Jesus said to them; 'Do not be afraid, and do not consider me to be a little child; for I am and always have been perfect, and all the beasts of the field must needs be tame before me.' Lions and panthers adored him likewise, and accompanied them in the desert. Wherever Joseph and the blessed Mary went, these went before them, showing them the way and bowing their heads, and showing their submission by wagging their tails; they adored him with great reverence. Now at first, when Mary

saw the lions and the panthers, and various kinds of wild beasts coming about them, she was very much afraid. But the infant Jesus looked into her face with a joyful countenance, and said: 'Be not afraid, mother; for they come not to do thee harm, but they make haste to serve both thee and me.' With these words he drove all fear from her heart. And the lions kept walking with them, and with the oxen and the asses and the beasts of burden which carried their baggage, and did not hurt a single one of them; but they were tame among the sheep and the rams which they had brought with them from Judæa, and which they had with them. They walked among wolves and feared nothing, and no one of them was hurt by another." [1]

So, too, when Mary looked helplessly up at the fruit of a palm-tree hanging far out of her reach, the child Jesus, "with a joyful countenance, reposing in the bosom of his mother, said to the palm, 'O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit.' And immediately at these words the

[1] This and the other passages from the Apocryphal Gospels here cited are in the translation by Alexander Walker.

palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from its fruit, with which they were all refreshed. And after they had gathered all its fruit, it remained bent down, waiting the order to rise from him who had commanded it to stoop. Then Jesus said to it, 'Raise thyself, O palm-tree, and be strong, and be the companion of my trees which are in the paradise of my Father; and open from thy roots a vein of water which has been hid in the earth, and let the waters flow, so that we may be satisfied from thee.' And it rose up immediately, and at its root there began to come forth a spring of water, exceedingly clear and cool and sparkling. And when they saw the spring of water they rejoiced with great joy, and were satisfied, themselves and all their cattle and their beasts. Wherefore they gave thanks to God."

The legends which relate to the boyhood of Jesus carry back with a violent or confused sense the acts of his manhood. Thus he is represented more than once as willing the death of a playmate, and then contemptuously bringing him to life again. A favorite story grossly misconceives the incident of Christ with the Doctors in the temple, and

makes him turn his schoolmaster into ridicule. There are other stories, the incidents of which are not reflections of anything in the Gospels, but are used to illustrate in a childish way the wonder-working power of the boy. Here is one which curiously mingles the miraculous power with the Saviour's doctrine of the Sabbath: —

"And it came to pass, after these things, that in the sight of all Jesus took clay from the pools which he had made, and of it made twelve sparrows. And it was the Sabbath when Jesus did this, and there were very many children with him. When, therefore, one of the Jews had seen him doing this, he said to Joseph, 'Joseph, dost thou not see the child Jesus working on the Sabbath at what it is not lawful for him to do? For he has made twelve sparrows of clay.' And when Joseph heard this, he reproved him, saying, 'Wherefore doest thou on the Sabbath such things as are not lawful for us to do?' And when Jesus heard Joseph he struck his hands together, and said to his sparrows, 'Fly!' and at the voice of his command they began to fly. And in the sight and hearing of all that stood by he said to the birds, 'Go and fly through the earth,

and through all the world, and live.' And when those that were there saw such miracles they were filled with great astonishment."

It is interesting to note how many of these stories connect the child with animals. The passage in Isaiah which prophesied the great peace in the figure of a child leading wild beasts had something to do with this; so had the birth of Jesus in a manger, and the incident of the entry into Jerusalem: but I suspect that the imagination scarcely needed to hunt very far or very curiously for suggestions, since the world over childhood has been associated with brute life, and the writers of the Apocryphal Gospels had only to make these animals savage when they would illustrate the potency of the childhood of Jesus.

"There is a road going out of Jericho," says the Pseudo-gospel of Matthew, "and leading to the river Jordan, to the place where the children of Israel crossed; and there the ark of the covenant is said to have rested. And Jesus was eight years old, and he went out of Jericho and went towards the Jordan. And there was beside the road, near the banks of the Jordan, a cave,

where a lioness was nursing her cubs; and no one was safe who walked that way. Jesus, then, coming from Jericho, and knowing that in that cave the lioness had brought forth her young, went into it in the sight of all. And when the lions saw Jesus they ran to meet him, and adored him. And Jesus was sitting in the cavern, and the lion's cubs ran hither and thither round his feet, fawning upon him and sporting. And the older lions, with their heads bowed down, stood at a distance and adored him, and fawned upon him with their tails. Then the people, who were standing afar off, not seeing Jesus, said, 'Unless he or his parents had committed grievous sins, he would not of his own accord have offered himself up to the lions.' And when the people were thus reflecting within themselves, and were lying under great sorrow, behold, on a sudden, in the sight of the people, Jesus came out of the cave, and the lions went before him, and the lion's cubs played with each other before his feet. And the parents of Jesus stood afar off, with their heads bowed down, and watched; likewise, also, the people stood at a distance, on account of the lions; for they did not

dare to come close to them. Then Jesus began to say to the people, 'How much better are the beasts than you, seeing that they recognize their Lord and glorify him; while you men, who have been made after the image and likeness of God, do not know him! Beasts know me, and are tame; men see me, and do not acknowledge me.'"

To the mind of these early Christians the life of Jesus was compounded of holiness and supernatural power; so far as they distinguished these, the holiness was the cause of the power, and hence, when the imagination fashioned saints out of men and women, it followed the same course which it had taken with the Master. The childhood of the saints was an anticipation of maturer virtues and powers, rather than a manifestation of ingenuous innocence. There was a tendency to explain exceptional qualities in lives by extending them backward into youth, thereby gaining for them an apparent corroboration. The instances of this in the legends are frequent. Mothers, like the Virgin Mary, have premonitions that their children are to be in some special manner children of God, and the characteristics of later life are foreshadowed at birth. The

Virgin herself was thus dealt with. The strong human feeling which subsequently, when the tenderness of Christ had been petrified into judgment, interposed the Virgin as mediator, found gratification in surrounding Mary's infancy and childhood with a supernatural grace and power, the incidents in some cases being faint reflections of incidents in the life of her son; as when we are told that Joachim and Anna carried Mary, then three years old, to place her among the virgins in the temple of God. "And when she was put down before the doors of the temple, she went up the fifteen steps so swiftly that she did not look back at all; nor did she, as children are wont to do, seek for her parents. Whereupon her parents, each of them anxiously seeking for the child, were both alike astonished until they found her in the temple, and the priests of the temple themselves wondered."

In like manner a halo of light played about S. Catherine's head when she was born. The year of the birth of S. Elizabeth of Hungary was full of blessings to her country; the first words she uttered were those of prayer, and when three years old she gave signs of the charity which marked her life

by giving her toys and garments to those less fortunate than herself. A pretty story is told of her betrothal to Prince Louis of Thuringia. Herman of Thuringia sent an embassy to the king of Hungary, desiring the little Elizabeth, then only four years old, for his son; and the maiden accompanied the embassy, carrying with her a silver cradle and silver bath, which her father had given her. She was betrothed to Louis, and the little pair played happily together in the same cradle. S. Genevieve of Paris was a maiden of seven, who tended a flock of sheep at the village of Narterre. Hither came S. Germain, and when the inhabitants were assembled to receive his benediction his eyes rested on the little shepherdess, and seeing her saintliness he set her apart as a bride of Christ. S. Gregory Nazianzen had a dream when he was a boy, in which two heavenly virgins of celestial beauty visited him: they were Chastity and Temperance, and so captivating was their presence, so winning were their words, that he awoke to take perpetual vows of continence. S. John Chrysostom was a dull boy at school, and so disturbed was he by the ridicule of his fellows that he went into a church to pray to

the Virgin for help. A voice came from the image: "Kiss me on the mouth, and thou shalt be endowed with all learning." He did this, and when he returned to his schoolfellows they saw a golden circle about his mouth, and his eloquence and brilliancy astounded them. Martyrdom was the portion of these saintly children as well as of their elders. The story is told of Hilarion, one of the four children of Saturninus the priest, that when the proconsul of Carthage thought to have no difficulty in dealing with one of tender age, the child resisted all cajolings and threats. "I am a Christian," said the little fellow. "I have been at the collect [that is, assisted as an acolyte], and it was of my own voluntary choice, without any compulsion." Thereupon the proconsul, who was probably a father, threatened him, as the story runs, "with those little punishments with which children are accustomed to be chastised," but the child only laughed at the idea of giving up his faith for fear of a whipping. "I will cut off your nose and ears!" shouted the exasperated inquisitor. "You may do it, but I shall be a Christian still," replied the undaunted boy; and when he was ordered off to prison with the rest,

he was heard to pipe forth, "God be thanked," and so was led away.

These random incidents are, for the most part, mainly anticipatory of mature experience. They can be matched with the details of Protestant hagiology as recorded in a class of books more common forty years ago than now. It is their remoteness that lends a certain grace and charm to them. The life of a little Christian in the fourth century is invested with an attraction which is wanting in the circumstance of some juvenile saint living in the midst of indifferent scoffers of the early part of the nineteenth century.

Occasionally, however, the legends inclose the saintly attributes in some bit of romance, or betray a simple, ingenuous sympathy with childish nature. The legend of S. Kenelm has a faint suspicion of kinship with the story of the babes in the wood. King Kenwulf of Wessex died, and left two daughters, Cwendrida and Burgenilda, and a son of seven years, named Kenelm. The elder of the daughters wished the child out of the way, that she might reign; so she gave money to Askbert, his guardian, the wicked uncle of the story, and bade him privily slay

the boy. So Askbert took Kenelm into a wood, as if for a hunt, and by and by the child, tired with the heat, fell asleep under the shade of a tree. Askbert, seeing his time had come, set to work to dig a grave, that all might be in readiness; but Kenelm woke, and said, "It is in vain that you think to kill me here. I shall be slain in another spot. In token whereof, see this rod blossom;" and so saying, he stuck a stick into the ground, and it instantly took root and began to flower. In after days it was a great ash-tree, known as S. Kenelm's ash. Then Askbert took the little king to another spot, and the child, now wide awake, began to sing the Te Deum. When he came to the verse, "The noble army of martyrs praise Thee," Askbert cut off his head, and then buried him in the wood. Just as he did this, a white dove flew into the church of S. Peter in Rome, and laid on the high altar a letter, which it bore in its beak. The letter was in English, and it was some time before any one could be found who could read it. Then it was discovered that Kenelm had been killed and his body hidden away. The Pope thereupon wrote letters into England telling of this sorry affair, and men went

forth to find the body of the little king. They were led by a pillar of light, which stood over the place where the body lay. So they bore it off and buried it; but they built a chapel over the spot where they had found the body, which is known as S. Kenelm's chapel to this day. There the chapel stands near Hales Owen; how else did it get its name? and as Mr. Freeman sagely remarks, "It is hard to see what should have made anybody invent such a tale, if nothing of the kind had ever happened."

Another of the stories which has a half fairy-tale character is that of the martyrdom of the little S. Christina, who was shut up in a high tower by her father, and bidden spend her time before gold and silver gods; his private purpose being to keep her out of the way of troublesome lovers. Christina tired of her divine playthings, and in spite of her father's indulgence, since he obligingly took away all the images but three, would have nothing to do with false gods. She was visited by angels and instructed in Christianity. She combined courage in her new faith with a fine spirit of adventure; for she is represented as smashing the idols, letting herself down by a rope from her tower-prison, dis-

tributing the fragments of the idols among the poor, and clambering up again before morning. Her martyrdom showed various ingenious inventions of torture, but the odd part of the story is the manner in which the gold and silver idols always suggest a girl's playthings. We are told that when she was taken into the temple of Apollo she bade the idol step down and walk about the temple until she sent it back to its place. Then, proceeds the story gravely, she was put in a cradle filled with boiling pitch and oil, and four soldiers were set to rocking her.

In these and similar stories which abound in the Acta Sanctorum, the simple attributes of childish nature rarely shine through the more formal covering of churchly investiture. Nature could not always be expelled, but the imagination, busy with the construction of the ideal Christian life, was more concerned, as time went on, to make that conform to an ecclesiastical standard. It is pathetic to see the occasional struggle of poor humanity to break through the meshes in which it was entangled. The life of S. Francis of Assisi is full of incidents which illustrate this. His familiar intercourse with birds and beasts was but one of the

signs of an effort to escape from the cage in which he was an unconscious prisoner. One night, we are told, he rose suddenly from the earthen floor which made his bed, and rushed out into the open air. A brother monk, who was praying in his cell, looked through his window and saw S. Francis, under the light of the moon, fashion seven little figures of snow. "Here is thy wife," he said to himself; "these four are thy sons and daughters; the other two are thy servant and handmaid: and for all these thou art bound to provide. Make haste, then, and provide clothing for them, lest they perish with cold. But if the care of so many trouble thee, be thou careful to serve the Lord alone." The injunction to give up father and mother and family for the Lord's sake, when obeyed by one so tremulously alive to human sympathy as was S. Francis, had in it a power suddenly to disclose the depths of the human soul; nor can it be doubted that those who, like S. Francis, were eagerly thrusting aside everything which seemed to stand between them and the realization of the divine life paid heed to the significant words of the Lord which made a child the symbol of that life. In

practical dealing with the evils of the world the early church never lost sight of children. Orphans, especially the orphans of martyrs, were a sacred charge, and when monasteries arose and became, at least in the West, centres of civilization, they were refuges for foundlings as well as schools for the young. It is one of the distinct signs of the higher life which Christianity was slowly bringing into the world that the church adopted and protected children as children, for their own sakes. Foundlings had before been nurtured for the sake of profit, and we can easily do poor human nature the justice to believe in instances where pity and love had their honest sway; but it certainly was left to the church to incorporate in its very constitution that care of helpless childhood which springs from a profound sense of the dignity of life, and a growing conviction of the rights which pertain to personality.

For the history of Christianity is in the development of personality, and childhood has, from the beginning, come under the influence of a power which has been at work lifting the world into a recognition of its relation to God. It was impossible that the few significant words spoken by Christ

should be forgotten; nevertheless, they do not seem to have impressed themselves upon the consciousness of men. At least it may be said that in the growth of Latin Christianity they do not come forward specifically as furnishing the ground and reason for a regard for childhood. The work to be done by the Latin church was largely one of organizing human society under an anthropomorphic conception of God. It gave a certain fixed objectivity to God, placed him at a distance from the world, and made the approach to him to be by a succession of intermediary agents. Nevertheless, the hierarchy which resulted rested upon ethical foundations. The whole grand scheme did, in effect, rivet and fix the sense of personal responsibility and personal integrity. It made each man and woman aware of his and her relation to law in the person of its ministers, and this law was a law which reached to the thoughts of the heart.

The system, as such, had little to do with childhood. It waited for its close, but it pushed back its influence over the line of adolescence, making as early as might be the day when the child should come into conscious relation with the church. Through

the family, however, it powerfully affected the condition of childhood, for by its laws and its ritual it was giving religious sanction to the family, even while it was gradually divorcing itself from humanity under plea of a sanctity which was more than human. Its conception of a religious devotedness which was too good for this world, whereby contempt of the body was put in place of redemption of the body, and celibacy made more honorable than marriage, undermined its hold upon the world, which it sought to govern and to furnish with ideals.

Inasmuch as this great system dealt with persons in relations which could be exactly defined and formulated, it would be idle to seek in the literature which reflects it for any considerable representation of that period of human life in which the forms are as yet undetermined. Nevertheless, childhood exercises even here its subtle power of recalling men to elemental truths. Dante was the prophet of a spiritual Rome, which he saw in his vision outlined against the background of the existing hierarchy. It would be in vain to search through the Divine Comedy for many references to childhood. As he says himself in the Inferno, —

"For this is not a sportive enterprise
To speak the universe's lowest hold,
Nor suits a tongue that Pa and Mammy cries." [1]

And the only picture of childhood in that vision is the melancholy one of the horrid sufferings of Count Ugolino and his children in the Tower of Hunger. In the Paradiso there are two passages of interest. Near the close of the twenty-seventh canto, Beatrice, breaking forth into a rapt utterance of the divine all in all, suddenly checks herself as she remembers how the curse of covetousness shuts men out from entrance into the full circle of divine movement, and then, with a swift and melancholy survey of the changes in human life, cries bitterly: —

"Faith, Art, and Innocence are found alone
With little children; then they scatter fast
Before the down across the cheek have grown.
There is that lispeth, and doth learn to fast,
Who afterward, with tongue untied from May
To April, down his throat all meats will cast.
There is that, lisping, loveth to obey
His mother, and he 'll wish her in the tomb,
When sentences unbroken he can say."

Again, in the thirty-second canto, S. Bernard is pointing out the circles of the Rose, and after denoting the degrees of saints before Christ and after, proceeds: —

[1] Canto xxxii. 7–9, Cayley's translation.

"And from the seats, in midway rank, that knit
These double files, and downwards, thou wilt find
That none do for their own deserving sit,
But for another's under terms assigned;
For every one of these hath been set free
Ere truly self-determined was the mind.
This by the childish features wilt thou see,
If well thou scan them, and if well thou list
Wilt hear it by the childlike symphony."

Dante is perplexed by the difference even in these innocent babes, but S. Bernard reminds him that there is difference in endowment, but that all are subject to the divine all-embracing law: —

"And therefore these, who took such hasty flight,
Into the true life not without a cause
Are entered so, these more, and those less, bright," —

an interpretation of the vision which is really less scholastic than suggested by the deeper insight of the poetic mind.

The most significant passage, however, is found in the famous words at the beginning of the Vita Nuova, which fix Dante's first sight of Beatrice when he was nine years old. "And since," he closes, "to dwell upon the passions and actions of such early youth seems like telling an idle tale, I will leave them, and, passing over many things which might be drawn from the original where

it out of the hard materials of the present, and was always looking for some substantial bridge which should connect the two worlds; seeing decay and change here, it transferred empires and powers to the other side of the gulf, and sought to reërect them upon an everlasting basis.

Such thought had little in common with the hope, the fearlessness, the faith, of childhood, and thus childhood as an image had largely faded out of art and literature. One only great exception there was, — the representation in art of the child Jesus; and in the successive phases of this representation may be read a remarkable history of the human soul.

V

IN MEDIÆVAL ART

THE power of Christianity lies in its prophecy of universality, and the most significant note of this power is in its comprehension of the poor and the weak, not merely as the objects of a benediction proceeding from some external society, but as themselves constituent members of that society, sharing in all its rights and fulfilling its functions. When the last great prophet of Israel and forerunner of Judaic Christianity sent to inquire what evidence Jesus of Nazareth could give that he was the Christ, the answer which came back had the conclusive words, "To the poor the gospel is preached." The same Jesus, when he would give his immediate followers the completest type of the kingdom which was to prevail throughout the world, took a child, and set him in the midst of them. There is no hardly gained position in the development of human society which may not

find its genetic idea in some word or act of the Son of Man, and the proem to the great song of an expectant democracy is in the brief hour of the first Christian society, which held all things in common.

The sketch of a regenerated human society, contained in the New Testament, has been long in filling out, and the day which the first generation of Christians thought so near at hand has thus far had only a succession of proleptic appearances; but from the first the note of the power of Christianity, which lies in the recognition of poverty and weakness, has never been wanting, and has been most loudly struck in the great epochs of Christian revival. In the struggle after purity of associated life, which had its witness in the orders of the church, poverty was accepted as a necessary condition, and the constructive genius of the human mind, dealing with the realities of Christian faith, rose to its highest point in presenting, not the maturity, but the infancy of Jesus Christ. Each age offers its contribution to the perfection of the Christian ideal, and while, in the centuries lying on either side of the Renaissance, the church as an ecclesiastical system was enforcing the dogma of

mediatorial sacrifice as something outside of humanity, the spirit of God, in the person of great painters, was drawing the thoughts of men to the redemption of the world, which lies in the most sacred of human relations. The great efflorescence of art, which we recognize as the gift of these centuries, has left as its most distinctive memorial the type of Christianity expressed in the Madonna.

I

In the Holy Family the child is the essential figure. In the earliest examples of the mother and child, both Mary and Jesus are conceived as symbols of religious faith, and the attitude of the child is unchildlike, being that of a dispenser of blessings with uplifted hand. The group is not distinctly of the mother and child, but of the Virgin and the Saviour, the Saviour being represented as a child in order to indicate the ground of the adoration paid to the Virgin. They stand before one as possessed of coördinate dignity. It is a curious and suggestive fact that the Byzantine type of the Madonna, which rarely departed much from this symbolic treatment, has continued to be the

preference of those whose conceptions of the religious life are most closely identified with a remote sacramentarianism. The Italian lemonade-seller has a Byzantine Madonna in his booth; the Belgian churches abound in so-called sacred pictures; the Russian merchant salutes an icon of the same type; and the ritualistic enthusiast of the Anglican revival modifies his æsthetic views by his religious sympathy, and stops short in his admiration with Cimabue and Giotto.

In the development of the Madonna from its first form as a rigid symbol to its latest as a realistic representation of motherhood, we are aware of a change in the minds of the people who worship before the altars where the pictures are placed, and in the minds of the painters who produce the almost endless variations on this theme. The worshipper, dispossessed of a belief in the fatherhood of God, came to take refuge in the motherhood of Mary. Formally taught the wrath of God, he found in the familiar relation of mother and child the most complete type vouchsafed to him of that love which the church by many informal ways bade him believe lay somewhere in the divine life.

Be this as it may, the treatment of the subject in a domestic and historical. form followed the treatment in a religious and ecclesiological mode. In the earlier representations of the Madonna there was a twofold thought exhibited. The mother was the queen of heaven, and she derived her dignity from the child on her knee. Hence she is sometimes shown adoring the child, and the child looks up into the mother's face with his finger on his lip, expressive of the utterance, I am the Word. This adoration of the child by the mother was, however, but a transient phase: the increasing worship paid to the Virgin forbade that she should be so subordinated; and in the gradual expansion of the theme, by which saints and martyrs and angels were grouped in attendant ministry, more and more importance was attached to the person of the Virgin. The child looks up in wonder and affectionate admiration. He caresses her, and offers her a child's love mingled with a divine being's calm self-content.

For throughout the whole period of the religious presentation of the Madonna, even when the Madonna herself is conspicuously the occasion of the picture, we may observe

the influence of the child, — an influence sometimes subtle, sometimes open and manifest. It is not enough to say that this child is Jesus, as it is not enough to say that the mother is the Virgin Mary. The divine child is the sign of an ever-present childhood in humanity; the divine mother the sign of a love which the religion of Christianity never wholly forgot. The common imagination was perpetually seeking to relieve Mary and Jesus of all attributes which interfered with the central and inhering relation of mother and child: through this type of love the mind apprehended the gospel of Christianity as in no other way.

Indeed, this apotheosis of childhood and maternity is at the core of the religion of hope which was inclosed in the husk of mediæval Christianity, and it was made the theme of many variations. Before it had ceased to be a symbol of worship, it was offering a nucleus for the expression of a more varied human hope and interest. The Holy Family in the hands of painters and sculptors, and the humbler class of designers which sprang into notice with the introduction of printing and engraving, becomes more and more emblematic of a pure and

happy domestic group. Joseph is more frequently introduced, and John Baptist appears as a playmate of the child Jesus; sometimes they are seen walking in companionship. Certain incidents in later life are symbolically prefigured in the realistic treatment of homely scenes, as in the Madonna by Giulio Romano, where the child stands in a basin, while the young S. John pours water upon him, Mary washes him, S. Elizabeth stands by holding a towel, and S. Joseph watches the scene, — an evident prefigurement of the baptism in the Jordan. Or again, Mary, seated, holds the infant Christ between her knees; Elizabeth leans over the back of the chair; Joseph rests on his staff behind the Virgin; the little S. John and an angel present grapes, while four other angels are gathering and bringing them. By such a scene Ippolito Andreasi would remind people that Jesus is the true vine.

II

The recognition of childhood as the heart of the family is discoverable even more emphatically in the art of the northern people, among whom domestic life always had

greater respect. It may seem a trivial reason, but I suspect nature holds the family more closely together in cold countries, which compel much indoor and fireside life, than in lands which tempt to vagrancy. At any rate, the fact remains that the Germanic peoples have been home-cultivating. It did not need the Roman Tacitus to find this out, but his testimony helps us to believe that the disposition was a radical one, which Christianity reinforced rather than implanted. Lord Lindsay makes the pregnant observation, "Our Saviour's benediction of the little children as a subject [is] from first to last Teutonic, — I scarcely recollect a single Italian instance of it;" [1] and in the revival of religious art, at which Overbeck and Cornelius assisted, this and similar subjects, by their frequency, mark a differentiation from art south of the Alps, whose traditions, nevertheless, the German school was consciously following.

Although of a period subsequent to the Renaissance, an excellent illustration of the religious representation of the childhood of Jesus in northern art is contained in a series of twelve prints executed in the Netherlands,

[1] *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, iii. 270.

and described in detail by Mrs. Jameson.[1] The series is entitled The Infancy of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the title-page is surrounded by a border composed of musical instruments, spinning-wheels, distaffs, and other implements of female industry, intermixed with all kinds of masons' and carpenters' tools. In the first of the prints, the figure of Christ is seen in a glory, surrounded by cherubim. In the second, the Virgin is seated on the hill of Sion; the infant in her lap, with outspread arms, looks up to a choir of angels, and is singing with them. In the third, Jesus slumbering in his cradle is rocked by two angels, while Mary sits by, engaged in needlework. Beneath is a lullaby in Latin which has been translated: —

> "Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguiling,
> Mother sits beside thee, smiling,
> Sleep my darling, tenderly!
> If thou sleep not, mother mourneth
> Singing as her wheel she turneth,
> Come soft slumber, balmily!"

The fourth shows the interior of a carpenter's shop: Joseph is plying his work, while Joachim stands near him; the Virgin is measuring linen, and S. Anna looks on;

[1] *Legends of the Madonna*, Part III.

two angels are at play with the infant Christ, who is blowing soap-bubbles. In the fifth picture, Mary prepares the family meal, while Joseph is in the background chopping wood; more in front, Jesus sweeps together the chips, and two angels gather them. In the sixth, Mary is seen reeling off a skein of thread; Joseph is squaring a plank; Jesus is picking up chips, again assisted by two angels. The seventh shows Mary seated at her spinning-wheel; Joseph, aided by Jesus, is sawing through a large beam, the two angels standing by. The eighth is somewhat similar: Mary holds her distaff, while Joseph saws a beam on which Jesus stands, and the two angels help in the work. In the ninth print, Joseph is busy building the framework of a house, assisted by one of the angels; Jesus is boring with a large gimlet, the other angel helping him; and Mary winds thread. In the next, Joseph is at work roofing the house; Jesus, in company with the angels, carries a beam up the ladder; while below, in front, Mary is carding wool or flax. The eleventh transfers the work, with an apparent adaptation to Holland, to the building of a boat, where Joseph is helped by Jesus, who holds a ham-

mer and chisel, still attended by the angels; the Virgin is knitting a stocking, and the newly built house is seen in the background. In the last of the series, Joseph is erecting a fence round a garden; Jesus, with the help of the angels, is fastening the palings together; while Mary is weaving garlands of roses.

Here is a reproduction of the childhood of the Saviour in the terms of a homely Netherland family life, the naturalistic treatment diversified by the use of angelic machinery. The prints were a part of the apparatus used by the priests in educating the people. However such instruction may have fallen short of the highest truths of Christianity, its recognition of the simple duties of life and its enforcement of these by the example of the Son of Man make us slow to regard such interposition of the church as remote from the spirit of Christ. If, as is quite possible, these prints were employed by the Jesuits, then their significance becomes doubly noticeable. In that vigorous attempt by Loyola and his order to maintain an organic Christian unity against the apparent disruption of Christianity, such a mode as this would find a place as serving

to emphasize that connection between the church and the family which the Jesuits instinctively felt to be essential to the supremacy of the former.

III

Whatever light the treatment of the Madonna subject may throw upon the ages in which it is uppermost in men's thoughts, the common judgment is sound which looks for the most significance in the works of Raphael. Even those who turn severely away from him, and seek for purer art in his predecessors, must needs use his name as one of epochal consequence. So many forces of the age meet in Raphael, who was peculiarly open to influences, that no other painter can so well be chosen as an exponent of the idea of the time; and as one passes in review the successive Madonnas, one may not only detect the influence of Perugino, of Leonardo, of Michelangelo, and other masters, but may see the ripening of a mind, upon which fell the spirit of the age, busy with other things than painting.

Of the early Madonnas of Raphael, it is

noticeable how many present the Virgin engaged in reading a book, while the child is occupied in other ways, sometimes even seeking to interrupt the mother and disengage her attention. Thus in one in the Berlin museum, which is formal, though unaffected, Mary reads a book, while the child plays with a goldfinch; in the Madonna in the Casa Connestabile, at Perugia, the child plays with the leaves of the book; in the Madonna del Cardellino, the little S. John presents a goldfinch to Jesus, and the mother looks away from her book to observe the children; in that at Berlin, which is from the Casa Colonna, the child is held on the mother's knee in a somewhat struggling attitude, and has his left hand upon the top of her dress, near her neck, his right upon her shoulder, while the mother, with a look of maternal tenderness, holds the book aside. In the middle period of Raphael's work this motive appears once at least in the St. Petersburg Madonna, which is a quiet landscape-scene, where the child is in the Madonna's lap: she holds a book, which she has just been reading; the little S. John kneels before his divine companion with infantine grace, and offers him a cross,

which he receives with a look of tender love; the Madonna's eyes are directed to the prophetic play of the children with a deep, earnest expression.

The use of the book is presumably to denote the Madonna's piety; and in the earlier pictures she is not only the object of adoration to the worshipper, who sees her in her earthly form, yet endowed with sinless grace, but the object also of interest to the child, who sees in her the mother. This reciprocal relation of mother and child is sometimes expressed with great force, as in the Madonna della Casa Tempi, in the Pinacothek at Munich, where the Virgin, who is standing, tenderly presses the child's head against her face, while he appears to whisper words of endearment. In these and other of the earlier Madonnas of Raphael, there is an enthusiasm, and a dreamy sentiment which seems to seek expression chiefly through the representation of holy womanhood, the child being a part of the interpretation of the mother. The mystic solemnity of the subject is relieved by a lightness of touch, which was the irrepressible assertion of a strong human feeling.

Later, in what is called his middle period,

a cheerfulness and happy contemplation of life pervade Raphael's work, as in the Bridgewater Madonna, where the child, stretched in the mother's lap, looks up with a graceful and lively action, and fixes his eyes upon her in deep thought, while she looks back with maternal, reverent joy. The Madonna of the Chair illustrates the same general sentiment, where the mother appears as a beautiful and blooming woman, looking out of the picture in the tranquil enjoyment of motherly love; the child, full and strong in form, leans upon her bosom in a child's careless attitude, the picture of trust and content.

The works of Raphael's third period, and those executed by his pupils in a spirit and with a touch which leave them sometimes hardly distinguishable from the master's, show a profounder penetration of life, and at the same time a firmer, more reasonable apprehension of the divinity which lies inclosed in the subject. Mary is now something more than a young man's dream of virginal purity and maternal tenderness, — she is also the blessed among women; the infant Christ is not only the innocent, playful child, but the prophetic soul, conscious

of his divinity and his destiny. These characteristics pervade both the treatment which regards them as historic personages and that which invests them with adorable attributes as having their throne in heaven. The Holy Family is interpreted in a large, serious, and dignified manner, and in the exalted, worshipped Madonna there is a like vision of things eternal seen through the human form.

To illustrate this an example may be taken of each class. The Madonna del Passegio, in the Bridgewater gallery, is a well-known composition, which represents the Madonna and child walking through a field; Joseph is in advance, and has turned to look for the others. They have been stopped by the infant S. John Baptist, clad in a rough skin, who presses eagerly forward to kiss Jesus. The mother places a restraining hand upon the shoulders of S. John, and half withdraws the child Jesus from his embrace. A classic grace marks Jesus, who looks steadfastly into the eyes of the impassioned John. The three figures in the principal group are conceived in a noble manner: S. John, prophesying in his face the discovery of the Lamb of God; Mary, looking

down with a sweet gravity which marks the holy children, and would separate Jesus as something more than human from too close fellowship with John; Jesus himself, a picture of glorious childhood, with a far-reaching look in his eye, as he gently thrusts back the mother with one hand, and with the other lays hold of the cross which John bears.

On the other hand, an example of the treatment of the adorable Madonna is that of San Sisto, in the Dresden gallery. It is not necessary to dwell on the details of a picture which rises at once to every one's mind. The circumstance of innumerable angels' heads, of the attendant S. Sixtus and S. Barbara, the sweep of cloud and drapery, the suggestion of depths below and of heights above, of heaven itself listening at the Madonna's feet, — all these translate the mother and babe with ineffable sweetness and dignity into a heavenly place, and make them the centre of the spiritual universe. Yet in all this Raphael has rested his art in no elaborate use of celestial machinery. He has taken the simple, elemental relation, and invested it with its eternal properties. He gives not a supernatural

and transcendent mother and child, but a glorified humanity. Therefore it is that this picture, and with it the other great Madonnas of Raphael, may be taken entirely away from altar and sanctuary, and placed in the shrine of the household. The universality of the appeal is seen in the unhesitating adoption of the Sistine Madonna as an expression of religious art by those who are even antagonistic to the church which called it forth.

IV.

The concentration of Raphael's genius to so large an extent upon the subject of the Madonna was not a mere accident of the time, nor, when classic forms were renewing their power, was it a solecism. The spirit of the Renaissance entered profoundly into Raphael's work, and determined powerfully the direction which it took. When he was engaged upon purely classic themes, it is interesting to see how frequently he turned to the forms of children. His decorative work is rich with the suggestion which they bring. One may observe the graceful figures issuing from the midst of flower and leaf; above all, one may note how repeat-

edly he presents the myth of Amor, and recurs to the Amorini, types of childhood under a purely naturalistic conception.

The child Jesus and the child Amor appear side by side in the creations of Raphael's genius. In the great Renaissance, of which he was so consummate an exponent, the ancient classic world and the Christian met in these two types of childhood: the one a childhood of the air, unmixed with good or evil; the other a childhood of heaven and earth, proleptic of earthly conflict, proleptic also of heavenly triumph. The coincidence is not of chance. The new world into which men were looking was not, as some thought, to be in the submersion of Christianity and a return to Paganism, nor, as others, in a stern asceticism, which should render Christianity an exclusive church, standing aloof from the world as from a thing wholly evil. There was to be room for truth and love to dwell together, and the symbol of this union was the child. Raphael's Christ child drew into its features a classic loveliness; his Amor took on a Christ-like purity and truthfulness.

Leslie, in his Handbook for Young Painters, makes a very sensible reflection upon

Raphael's children, as distinguished from the unchildlike children of Francia, for example. "A fault of many painters," he says, "in their representations of childhood is, that they make it taking an interest in what can only concern more advanced periods of life. But Raphael's children, unless the subject requires it should be otherwise, are as we see them generally in nature, wholly unconcerned with the incidents that occupy the attention of their elders. Thus the boy, in the cartoon of the Beautiful Gate, pulls the girdle of his grandfather, who is entirely absorbed in what S. Peter is saying to the cripple. The child, impatient of delay, wants the old man to move on. In the Sacrifice at Lystra, also, the two beautiful boys placed at the altar, to officiate at the ceremony, are too young to comprehend the meaning of what is going on about them. One is engrossed with the pipes on which he is playing, and the attention of the other is attracted by a ram brought for sacrifice. The quiet simplicity of these sweet children has an indescribably charming effect in this picture, where every other figure is under the influence of an excitement they alone do not partake in. Children, in the works of

inferior painters, are often nothing else than little actors; but what I have noticed of Raphael's children is true, in many instances, of the children in the pictures of Rembrandt, Jan Steen, Hogarth, and other great painters, who, like Raphael, looked to nature for their incidents."

There was one artist of this time who looked to nature not merely for the incidents of childhood, but for the soul of childhood itself. It is impossible to regard the work of Luca della Robbia, especially in that ware which receives his name, without perceiving that here was a man who saw children and rejoiced in their young lives with a simple, ingenuous delight. The very spirit which led this artist to seek for expression in homely forms of material, to domesticate art, as it were, was one which would make him quick to seize upon, not the incidents alone, but the graces, of childhood. Nor is it straining a point to say that the purity of his color was one with the purity of this sympathy with childhood. The Renaissance as a witness to a new occupation of the world by humanity finds its finest expression in the hope which springs in the lovely figures of Luca della Robbia.

It is significant of this Renaissance — it is significant, I think we shall find, of every great new birth in the world — that it turns its face toward childhood, and looks into that image for the profoundest realization of its hopes and dreams. In the attitude of men toward childhood we may discover the near or far realization of that supreme hope and confidence with which the great head of the human family saw, in the vision of a child, the new heaven and the new earth. It was when his disciples were reasoning among themselves which of them should be the greatest that Jesus took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me." The reception of the Christ by men, from that day to this, has been marked by successive throes of humanity, and in each great movement there has been a new apprehension of childhood, a new recognition of the meaning involved in the pregnant words of the Saviour. Such a recognition lies in the children of Raphael and of Luca della Robbia. There may have been no express intimation on their part of the connection between their works and the

great prophecy, but it is often for later generations to read more clearly the presence of a thought by means of light thrown back upon it. The course of Christianity since the Renaissance supplies such a light.

VI

IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ART

I

To hunt through English literature and art for representations of childhood would seem to be like looking for the persons of children in any place where people congregate. How could there be any conspicuous absence, except under conditions which necessarily exclude the very young? Yet it is impossible to follow the stream of English literature, with this pursuit in mind, without becoming aware that at one point in its course there is a marked access of this force of childhood. There is, to be sure, a fallacy lurking in the customary study of the development of literature. We fall into the way of thinking of that literature as an organism proceeding from simpler to more complex forms; we are attent upon the transition of one epoch into another; we come to regard each period as essentially anticipatory of the succeeding period. We make the same

mistake often in our regard of historical sequence, looking at all past periods simply and exclusively with reference to the present stand from which we take our observations. A too keen sensibility to the logic which requires time for its conclusion, a too feeble sense of the logic which dwells in the relation between the seen and the unseen, — these stand in the way of a clear perception of the forces immanent in literature and life.

The distinction is worth bearing in mind when one surveys English literature with the purpose of recognizing the child in it. There are certain elemental facts and truths of which old and new cannot be predicated. The vision of helpless childhood is no modern discovery; it is no ancient revelation. The child at play was seen by Homer and by Cowper, and the latter did not derive his apprehension from any study of the former. The humanism which underlies all literature is independent of circumstances for its perception of the great moving forces of life; it is independent of the great changes in human history; even so great a change as the advent of Christianity could not interfere with the normal expression of elemental facts in life.

Wherein, then, lies the difference between an antique and a modern apprehension of childhood? For what may one look in a survey of English literature that he would not find in Greek or Roman authors? Is there any development of human thought in relation to childhood to be traced in a literature which has reflected the mind of the centuries since the Renaissance? The most aggressive type of modern Christianity, at any rate the most free type, is to be found amongst English-speaking people; and if Christianity has in any way modified the course of thought regarding the child, the effect will certainly be seen in English literature and art.

A recollection of ballad literature, without critical inquiry of the comparative age of the writings, brings to light the familiar and frequent incident of cruelty to children in some form: of the secret putting away of babes, as in the affecting ballad of the Queen's Marie; of the cold and heartless murder, as in the Cruel Mother, and in the tragic tale of The Child's Last Will, where a sudden dramatic and revealing turn is given, after the child has willed its various possessions, in the lines, —

" 'What wish leav'st thou thy step-mother
Little daughter dear?'
'Of hell the bitter sorrow
Sweet step-mother mine
For ah, ah! I am so ill, ah!'

" 'What wish leav'st thou thy old nurse
Little daughter dear?'
'For her I wish the same pangs
Sweet step-mother mine
For ah, ah! I am so ill, ah!'"

That grewsome story of Lamkin, with its dripping of blood in almost every stanza, gets half its curdling power from the slow torture of the sensibilities, as the babe is slain and then rocked in its cradle, and the mother, summoned by its cries, meets her own fate at the hands of the treacherous nurse and Lamkin, whose name is a piece of bald irony: —

" Then Lamkin 's ta'en a sharp knife
That hang down by his gaire,
And he has gi'en the bonny babe
A deep wound and a sair.

" Then Lamkin he rocked,
And the fause nourice sang
Till frae ilkae bore o' the cradle
The red blood outsprang.

" Then out it spak the ladie
As she stood on the stair,
'What ails my bairn, nourice,
That he 's greeting sae sair?

"'O still my bairn, nourice
O still him wi' the pap!'
'He winna still, lady,
For this nor for that.'

"'O still my bairn, nourice;
O still him wi' the wand!'
'He winna still, lady,
For a' his father's land.'

"'O still my bairn, nourice,
Oh still him wi' the bell!'
'He winna still, lady,
Till ye come down yoursel.'

"O the firsten step she steppit,
She steppit on a stane;
But the neisten step she steppit,
She met him, Lamkin."

Another early and significant illustration is found in the popular story of Hugh of Lincoln; but instead of turning to the ballad of that name, one may better have recourse to Chaucer's version as contained in the Canterbury tale of the Prioress. In the prologue to this tale appear the words of Scripture, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," in a paraphrase, and the Prioress turns to the Virgin, beseeching her to give words for the telling of the piteous tale. The story of Hugh of Lincoln — that in the reign of Henry III., the Jews of

Lincoln stole a boy of eight years, named Hugh, tortured and crucified him — was received with great credit, for it concentrated the venomous enmity with which Christians regarded the Jews, and by a refinement of cruelty pictured the Jews in a solitary instance as behaving in a Christian-like manner. Chaucer tells the story with exquisite pathos, lingering upon the childish ways of Hugh, and preparing the tears of his readers by picturing the little boy as a miniature saint. It can scarcely be called a picture of artless childhood; for though touches here and there bring out the prattler, Chaucer appears to have meant that his readers should be especially impressed by the piety of this "litel clergeoun," or chorister boy: —

> "A litel clergeoun, seven yeer of age,
> That day by day to scole was his wone;
> And eek also, whereas he saugh thymage
> Of Cristes mooder, he hadde in usage,
> As hym was taught, to knele adoun and seye
> His *Ave Marie*, as he goth by the weye."

And so we are told of the little fellow eager to learn the Alma Redemptoris of his elders, and conning it as he went to and from school, his way leading through the Jews' quarter: —

"As I have seyd, thurgh-out the Jewerie
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
Ful murily wolde he synge and crie
O *Alma redemptoris* evere-mo
The swetnesse hath his herte perced so
Of Cristes mooder, that to hire to preye
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye."

The wicked Jews, vexed by his singing, kill him, and cast his body into a pit. His weeping mother seeks him, and, happening by the pit, is made aware of his presence by the miracle of his dead lips still singing the Alma Redemptoris.

In two other stories has Chaucer dwelt upon the pathos of childhood and bereft or suffering motherhood. In the Man of Law's tale of Custance, there is a touching passage where Custance and her babe are driven away from the kingdom, and exposed to the sea in the ship which had brought them. The mother kneels upon the sand before embarking, and puts her trust in the Lord.

"Her litel child lay wepying in hir arm,
And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde,
'Pees litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm!'
With that hir kerchief of hir heed she breyde,
And over hise litel eyen she it leyde,
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste
And in-to hevene hire eyen up she caste."

Then she commits herself and her child to Mary by the love of Mary's child.

> "And up she rist, and walketh doun the stronde
> Toward the ship, — hir folweth al the prees, —
> And evere she preyeth hire child to hold his pees."

Again, in the Clerk's tale of Patient Griselda, the effect of the story is greatly heightened by the narrative of the successive partings of the mother with her child; and the climax is reached in the burst of gladness and pent-up feeling which overtakes Griselda at the restoration of her son and daughter. It is noticeable that in these and other instances childhood appears chiefly as an appeal to pity, rarely as an object of direct love and joy. This is not to be wondered at when one considers the character of the English race, and the nature of the redemption which it has been undergoing in the slow process of its submission to the spirit of Christ. We say the English race, without stopping to make nice distinctions between the elements which existed at the time of the Great Charter, just as we may properly speak of the American people of the time of the Constitution.

This character is marked by a brutality, a murderous spirit, which lies scarcely concealed, to-day, in the temper of every English crowd, and has left its mark on litera-

ture from the ballads to Oliver Twist. This brutal instinct, this rude, savage, northern spirit, is discovered in conflict with the disarming power of the spirit of Christ, and the stages of the conflict are most clearly indicated in poetry, which is to England what pictorial and sculpturesque art is to the south, the highest exponent of its spiritual life. More comprehensively, English literature affords the most complete means of measuring the advance of England in humanity.

It belongs to the nature of this deep conflict that there should appear from time to time the finest exemplars of the ideals formed by the divine spirit, side by side with exhibitions of the most willful baseness. English literature abounds in these contrasts; it is still more expressive of tides of spiritual life, the elevation of thought and imagination succeeded by almost groveling animalism. And since one of the symbols of a perfected Christianity is the child, it is not unfair to seek for its presence in literature, nor would it be a rare thing to discover it in passages which hint at the conflict between the forces of good and evil so constantly going on.

It is not strange, therefore, that the earliest illustrations of childhood should mainly turn, as we have seen, upon that aspect which is at once most natural and most Christian. Pity, like a naked, new-born babe, does indeed ride the blast in those wild, more than half-savage bursts of the English spirit which are preserved for us in ballad literature; and in the first springs of English poetic art in Chaucer, the child is as it were the mediator between the rough story and the melody of the singer. One cannot fail to see how the introduction of the child by Chaucer, in close union with the mother, is almost a transfer of the Madonna into English poetry, — a Madonna not of ritual, but of humanity.

There are periods in the history of every nation when the inner life is more completely exposed to view, and when the student, if he be observant, may trace most clearly the fundamental arteries of being. Such a period in England was the Elizabethan era, when the tumultuous English spirit manifested itself in religion, in politics, in enterprise, in adventure, and in intellectual daring, — that era which was dominated by the

great master of English speech. It is the fashion of every age to write its characteristics in forms which have become obsolete, and to resort to masquerade for a display of its real emotions. It was because chivalry was no longer the every-day habit of men that Spenser used it for his purposes, and translated the Seven Champions of Christendom into a profounder and more impassioned poem, emblematical of that great ethical conflict which has been a significant feature of English history from the first. In that series of knightly adventures, The Faery Queen, wherein the field of human character is traversed, sin traced to its lurking-place, and the old dragon of unrighteousness set upon furiously, there is a conspicuous incident contained in the second book. In each book Spenser conceives the antagonist of the knight, in some spiritual form, to have wrought a mischief which needs to be repaired and revenged. Thus a dragon occasions the adventures of the Red Cross knight, and in the legend of Sir Guyon the enchantress Acrasia, or Intemperance, has caused the death of a knight and his lady; the latter slays herself because of her husband's death, and plunges her babe's inno-

cent hands into her own bloody breast for a witness. Sir Guyon and the Palmer, standing over the dead bodies, hold grave discourse upon the incident; then they bury the dead, and seek in vain to cleanse the babe's hands in a neighboring fountain. The pure water will not be stained, and the child bears the name Ruddymane, — the Red-Handed, — and shall so bear the sign of a vengeance he is yet to execute.

It is somewhat difficult to see into the full meaning of Spenser's allegory, for the reason that the poet breaks through the meshes of his allegoric net and soars into a freer air; but there are certain strong lines running through the poem, and this of the ineradicable nature of sin is one of them. To Spenser, vexed with problems of life, that conception of childhood which knit it closely with the generations was a significant one, and in the bloody hand of the infant, which could not be suffered to stain the chaste fountain, he saw the dread transmission of an inherited guilt and wrong. The poet and the moralist struggle for ascendency, and in this conflict one may see reflected the passion for speculation in divinity which was already making deep marks in English literature.

But the Elizabethan era had its share of light-heartedness. The songs of the dramatists and other lyrics exhibit very clearly the influence upon literature of the revival of ancient learning. As the art of Italy showed the old poetic grace risen again under new conditions, so the dominant art of England caught a light from the uncovered glory of Greece and Rome. It was the time of the great translations of Phaer, Golding, North, and Chapman; and as those translations are bold appropriations of antiquity, not timid attempts at satisfying the requisitions of scholarship, so the figures of the old mythology are used freely and ingenuously; they are naturalized in English verse far more positively than afterwards in the *elegantia* of the Queen Anne and Georgian periods. Ben Jonson's Venus' Runaway is an exquisite illustration of this rich, decorative use of the old fable. It was partly through this sportive appropriation of the myth of Amor, so vital in all literature, that the lullabies of the time came to get their sweetness. The poet, in putting songs into the mother's mouth, is not so much reflecting the Virgin and Child as he is possessed with the spirit of Greek beauty,

and his delicate fancy plays about the image of a little Love. Thus may we read the Golden Slumbers of Dekker, in his Patient Grissel. By a pretty conceit George Gascoigne, in his Lullaby of a Lover, captures the sentiment of a mother and babe, to make it tell the story of his own love and content. There is a touching song by Robert Greene in his Menaphon, where Sephestia puts into her lullaby the story of her parting with the child's father: —

"Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old, there 's grief enough for thee.
The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt,
More thou crowed, more he cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide;
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bless;
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old, there 's grief enough for thee."

We are apt to look for everything in Shakespeare, but in this matter of childhood we must confess that there is a meagreness of reference which almost tempts us into constructing a theory to account for it. So far as dramatic representation is concerned, the necessary limitations of the stage easily

account for the absence of the young. Girls were not allowed to act in Shakespeare's time, and it is not easy to reduce boys capable of acting to the stature of young girls. More than this, boys and girls are not themselves dramatic in action, though in the more modern drama they are sometimes used, especially in domestic scenes, to heighten effects, and to make most reasonable people wish them in bed.

Still, within the limits enforced by his art, Shakespeare more than once rested much on youthful figures. The gay, agile Moth has a species of femineity about him, so that we fancy he would be most easily shown on the stage by a girl; but one readily recalls others who have distinct boyish properties. In Coriolanus, when the mother and wife go out to plead with the angry Roman, they take with them his little boy. Volumnia, frantic with fear, with love, and with a woman's changing passion, calls upon one and another to join her in her entreaty. Virgilia, the wife, crowds in a word at the height of Volumnia's appeal, when the voluble grandmother has been rather excitedly talking about Coriolanus treading on his mother's womb, that brought him into the world. Virgilia strikes in, —

"Ay, and mine
That brought you forth this boy, to keep your name
Living to time."

Whereupon young Marcius, with delicious boyish brag and chivalry: —

"A' shall not tread on me;
I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I 'll fight."

In the same play there is a description of the boy which tallies exactly with the single appearance which he makes in person. Valeria drops in upon the mother and grandmother in a friendly way, and civilly asks after the boy.

"*Vir.* I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

"*Vol.* He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than look upon his schoolmaster.

"*Val.* O' my word, the father's son: I 'll swear, 't is a very pretty boy. O' my troth, I looked upon him o' Wednesday half an hour together: has such a confirmed countenance. I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again: and over and over he comes, and up again; catched it again; or whether his fall enraged him, or how 't was, he did so set his teeth and tear it; O, I warrant, how he mammocked it!

"*Vol.* One on 's father's moods.

"*Val.* Indeed, la, 't is a noble child.

"*Vir.* A crack, madam."

The most eminent example in Shakespeare of active childhood is unquestionably the part played by young Arthur in the drama

of King John. It is the youth of Arthur, his dependence, his sorry inheritance of misery, his helplessness among the raging wolves about him, his childish victory over Hubert, and his forlorn death, when he leaps trembling from the walls, which impress the imagination. "Stay yet," says Pembroke to Salisbury, —

> "I 'll go with thee
> And find the inheritance of this poor child,
> His little kingdom of a forced grave."

Shakespeare, busy with the story of kings, is moved with deep compassion for this child among kings, who overcomes the hard heart of Hubert by his innocent words, the very strength of feeble childhood, and falls like a poor lamb upon the stones, where his princedom could not save him.

In that ghastly play of Titus Andronicus, which melts at last into unavailing tears, with what exquisite grace is the closing scene humanized by the passage where the elder Lucius calls his boy to the side of his dead grandsire: —

> "Come hither, boy; come, come, and learn of us
> To melt in showers: thy grandsire loved thee well:
> Many a matter hath he told to thee,
> Meet and agreeing with thine infancy;

In that respect, then, like a loving child,
Shed yet some small drops from thy tender spring,
Because kind nature doth require it so."

The relentless spirit of Lady Macbeth is in nothing figured more acutely than when the woman and mother is made to say, —

"I have given suck, and know
How tender 't is to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I sworn as you
Have done to this."

In the witch's hell-broth one ingredient is "finger of birth-strangled babe," while in the portents which rise to Macbeth's vision a bloody child and a child crowned, with a tree in his hand, are apparitions of ghostly prophecy. Then in that scene where Ross discloses slowly and with pent-up passion the murder of Macduff's wife and children, and Macduff hears as in a dream, waking to the blinding light of horrid day, with what a piercing shriek he cries out, —

"He has no children!"

and then surges back to his own pitiful state, transformed for a moment into an infuriated creature, all instinct, from which a hell-kite has stolen his mate and pretty brood.

By what marvelous flash of poetic power Shakespeare in this mighty passage lifts that humblest image of parental care, a hen and chickens, into the heights of human passion. Ah! as one sees a hen with a brood of chickens under her, — how she gathers them under her wings, and will stay in the cold if she can but keep them warm, — one's mind turns to those words of profound pathos spoken over the unloving Jerusalem; there was the voice of a nature into which was gathered all the father's and the mother's love. In these two passages one sees the irradiation of poor feathered life with the glory of the image of the highest.

How important a part in the drama of King Richard III. do the young princes play; as princes, indeed, in the unfolding of the plot, yet as children in the poet's portraiture of them. We hear their childish prattle, we see their timid shrinking from the dark Tower, and then we have the effect of innocent childhood upon the callous murderers, Dighton and Forrest, as related in that short, sharp, dramatic account which Tyrrel gives: —

> "Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
> To do this ruthless piece of butchery,

Although they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
Melting with tenderness and kind compassion
Wept like two children in their deaths' sad stories.
'Lo, thus,' quoth Dighton, 'lay those tender babes:'
'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another
Within their innocent alabaster arms:
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.
A book of prayers on their pillow lay;
Which once,' quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind;
But O! the devil' — there the villain stopp'd;
Whilst Dighton thus told on: 'We smothered
The most replenished sweet work of nature,
That from the prime creation e'er she framed.'
Thus both are gone with conscience and remorse;
They could not speak."

The glances at infancy, though infrequent, are touched with strong human feeling. Ægeon, narrating the strange adventures of his shipwreck, tells of the

"Piteous plainings of the pretty babes
That mourned for fashion, ignorant what to fear;"

and scattered throughout the plays are passages and lines which touch lightly or significantly the realm of childhood: as, —

"Pity like a naked, new-born babe;"

"'T is the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil,"

in Macbeth;

"Love is like a child
That longs for every thing that he can come by;"

"How wayward is this foolish love
That like a testy babe will scratch the nurse,
And presently all humble kiss the rod,"

in Two Gentlemen of Verona;

"Those that do teach young babes
Do it with gentle means and easy tasks,"

says Desdemona; and Cleopatra, when the poisonous asp is planting its fangs, says with saddest irony, —

"Peace! peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse asleep?"

There is a charming illustration of the blending of the classic myth of Amor with actual childhood in these lines of A Midsummer-Night's Dream, where Helena says,

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste:
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in games themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere."

In the noonday musing of Jaques, when the summer sky hung over the greenwood, and he fell to thinking of the round world

and all that dwell therein, the Seven Ages of Man passed in procession before him: —

> "At first the infant
> Muling and puking in the nurse's arms.
> And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school,"

until the last poor shambling creature is borne off in second childhood.

There are doubtless other passages which might be gleaned, but the survey is full enough to show how scantily, after all, Shakespeare has made use of the figure and the image of childhood. The reflection has led an ingenious writer to explain the fact by the circumstances of Shakespeare's life, which hindered his study of children. "He was clearly old for his age when still a boy, and so would have associated, not with children, but with young men. His marriage as a mere lad and the scanty legends of his youth all tend in the same direction. The course of his life led him to live apart from his children in their youth; his busy life in London brought him into the interior of but few families; his son, of whom he saw but little, died young. If our supposition be true, it is a pathetic thought that the great

dramatist was shut out from the one kind of companionship which, even while it is in no degree intellectual, never palls. A man, whatever his mental powers, can take delight in the society of a child, when a person of intellect far more matured, but inferior to his own, would be simply insufferable."[1]

The explanation is rather ingenious than satisfying. Where did Shakespeare get his knowledge of the abundant life which his dramas present? He had the privilege of most people of remembering his own boyhood, and the mind which could invent Hamlet out of such stuff as experience and observation furnished could scarcely have missed acquaintance enough with children to enable him to portray them whenever the exigencies of his drama required. No, it is simpler to refer the absence of children as actors to the limitations of the stage, and to ascribe the infrequent references to childhood to the general neglect of the merely domestic side of life in Shakespeare's art. Shakespeare's world was an out-of-doors, public world, and his men, women, and lovers carried on their lives with no denser concealment than a wood or an arras could afford.

[1] On Reading Shakespeare Through. *The* [London] *Spectator*, August 26, 1882.

The comprehensiveness of Shakespeare found some place for children; the lofty narrowness of Milton, none. The word *child*, even, can scarcely be found on a page of Milton's verse. In his Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, with its Hymn, how slight is the mention of the child Jesus! How far removed is the treatment from that employed in the great procession of Madonnas!

> "Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
> Afford a present to the Infant God?"

The Infant God! — that is Milton's attitude, more than half pagan. In L' Allegro and in Comus the lightness, which denotes the farthest swing of Milton's fancy, is the relief which his poetic soul found from the high themes of theology, in Greek art. One is aware that Milton's fine scholarship was the salvation of his poetry, as his Puritan sense of personality held in check a nature which else might have run riot in sportiveness and sensuousness. When he permitted himself his exquisite short flights of fancy, the material in which he worked was not the fresh spring of English nature, human or earthly, but the remote Arcadian virgin-

ity which he had learned of in his books. Not dancing children, but winged sprites, caught his poetic eye.

The weight of personal responsibility which rests upon the Puritan conception of life offers small play for the wantonness and spontaneity of childhood. Moreover, the theological substratum of Puritan morality denied to childhood any freedom, and kept the life of man in waiting upon the conscious turning of the soul to God. Hence childhood was a time of probation and suspense. It was wrong, to begin with, and was repressed in its nature until maturity should bring an active and conscious allegiance to God. Hence, also, parental anxiety was forever earnestly seeking to anticipate the maturity of age, and to secure for childhood that reasonable intellectual belief which it held to be essential to salvation; there followed often a replacement of free childhood by an abnormal development. In any event, the tendency of the system was to ignore childhood, to get rid of it as quickly as possible, and to make the state contain only self-conscious, determinate citizens of the kingdom of heaven. There was, unwittingly, a reversal of the divine message, and it was

said in effect to children: Except ye become as grown men and be converted, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Nevertheless, though Puritanism in its excessive anxiety may have robbed childhood of its freedom, the whole spirit of the movement was one conservative of family relations, and the narratives of domestic life under Puritanic control are often full of a grave sweetness. Indeed, it may almost be said that the domestic narrative was now born into English literature. Nor could the intense concern for the spiritual well-being of children, a religious passion reinforcing natural affection, fail to give an importance to the individual life of the family, and prepare the way for that new intelligence of the scope of childhood which was to come later to an England still largely dominated by Puritan ideas.

Milton expressed the high flight of the soul above earthly things. He took his place upon a summit where he could show the soul all the confines of heaven and earth. Bunyan, stirred by like religious impulses, made his soul trudge sturdily along toward an earthly paradise. The realism of his story often veils successfully the spiritual

sense, and makes it possible for children to read the Pilgrim's Progress with but faint conception of its religious import. In the second part of the allegory, Christian's wife and children set out on their ramble, in Christian's footsteps. There is no lack of individuality in characterization of the persons. The children are distinctly conceived as children; they are, to be sure, made to conform occasionally to the demands of the spiritual side of the allegory, yet they remain children, and by their speech and action betray the childish mind.

They come in sight of the lions, and "the boys that went before were glad to cringe behind, for they were afraid of the lions, so they stepped back and went behind." When they come to the Porter's Lodge, they abide there awhile with Prudence, Piety, and Charity; Prudence catechizes the four children, who return commendably correct answers. But Matthew, the oldest boy, falls sick of the gripes; and when the physician asks Christiana what he has been eating lately, she is as ignorant as any mother can be.

"Then said Samuel," who is as communicative as most younger brothers, "'Mother,

mother, what was that which my brother did gather up and eat, so soon as we were come from the Gate that is at the head of this way? You know that there was an orchard on the left hand, on the other side of the wall, and some of the trees hung over the wall, and my brother did plash and did eat.'

"'True, my child,' said Christiana, 'he did take thereof and did eat, naughty boy as he was. I did chide him, and yet he would eat thereof.'" So Mr. Skill, the physician, proceeds to make a purge. "You know," says Bunyan, in a sly parenthesis, "physicians give strange medicines to their patients." "And it was made up," he goes on, "into pills, with a promise or two, and a proportionable quantity of salt. Now he was to take them three at a time, fasting, in half a quarter of a pint of Tears of Repentance. When this Portion was prepared and brought to the boy, he was loth to take it, though torn with the gripes as if he should be pulled in pieces. 'Come, come,' said the physician, 'you must take it.' 'It goes against my stomach,' said the boy. 'I must have you take it,' said his mother. 'I shall vomit it up again,' said the boy. 'Pray,

sir,' said Christiana to Mr. Skill, 'how does it taste?' 'It has no ill taste,' said the doctor, and with that she touched one of the pills with the tip of her tongue. 'O Matthew,' said she, 'this Portion is sweeter than honey. If thou lovest thy mother, if thou lovest thy brothers, if thou lovest Mercy, if thou lovest thy life, take it.' So with much ado, after a short prayer for the blessing of God upon it, he took it, and it wrought kindly with him. It caused him to purge, it caused him to sleep and rest quietly, it put him into a fine heat and breathing sweat, and did quite rid him of his gripes."

The story is dotted with these lifelike incidents, and the consistency is rather in the basis of the allegory than in the allegory itself. In truth, we get in the Pilgrim's Progress an inimitable picture of social life in the lower middle class of England, and in this second part a very vivid glimpse of a Puritan household. The glimpse is corrective of a too stern and formal apprehension of social Puritanism, and in the story are exhibited the natural charms and graces which not only could not be expelled by a stern creed, but were essentially connected with the lofty ideals which made Puritanism

a mighty force in history. Bunyan had a genius for story-telling, and his allegory is very frank; but what he showed as well as what he did not show in his picture of Christiana and the children indicates the constraint which rested upon the whole Puritan conception of childhood. It is seen at its best in Bunyan, and this great Puritan poet of common life found a place for it in his survey of man's estate; nature asserted itself in spite of and through Puritanism.

Milton's Christmas Hymn has the organ roll of a mind moving among high themes, and making the earth one of the golden spheres. Pope's sacred eclogue of the Messiah is perhaps the completest expression of the religious sentiment of an age which was consciously bounded by space and time. In Pope's day, the world was scarcely a part of a greater universe; eternity was only a prolongation of time, and the sense of beauty, acute as it was, was always sharply defined. Pope's rhymed couplets, with their absolute finality, their clean conclusion, their epigrammatic snap, are the most perfect symbols of the English mind of that period. When in the Messiah we read, —

> "Rapt into future times the bard begun,
> A Virgin shall conceive, a Virgin bear a son!
> . . . . . .
> Swift fly the years and rise the expected morn!
> O spring to light, auspicious babe, be born!"

we remember Milton's Infant God. The two poets touch, with a like faintness, the childhood of Jesus, but the one through awe and grandeur of contemplation, the other through the polite indifference of a man of the world. Or take Pope's mundane philosophy, as exhibited most elaborately in his Essay on Man, and set it beside Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man: —

> "Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law
> Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw:
> Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
> A little louder, but as empty quite:
> Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage,
> And beads and prayer-books are the toys of age:
> Pleased with this bauble still, as that before;
> Till tired he sleeps and life's poor play is o'er."

This is the only passage in the Essay hinting at childhood, and suffices to indicate how entirely insignificant in the eyes of the philosophy underlying Pope and his school was the whole thought of childhood. The passage, while not perhaps consciously imitative of Shakespeare, suggests comparison, and

one finds in Jaques under the greenwood a more human feeling. Commend us to the tramp before the drawing-room philosopher!

The prelusive notes of a new literature were sounded by Fielding, Gray, Goldsmith, and Cowper. It was to be a literature which touched the earth again, the earth of a common nature, the earth also of a national inheritance.

Fielding, though painting contemporary society in a manner borrowed in a measure from the satiric drama, was moving constantly into the freer domain of the novelist who is a critic of life, and when he would set forth the indestructible force of a pure nature in a woman who is placed in a loose society, as in Amelia, he instinctively hedges the wife about with children, and it is a mark of his art that these children are not mere pawns which are moved about to protect the queen; they are genuine figures, their prattle is natural, and they are constantly illustrating in the most innocent fashion the steadfastness of Amelia.

It is significant that Gray, with his delicate taste and fine classical scholarship, when he composed his Elegy used first

the names of eminent Romans when he wrote: —

"Some village Cato, who with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of the fields withstood;
Some mute, inglorious Tully here may rest,
Some Cæsar, guiltless of his country's blood."

He changed these names for those of English heroes, and in doing so broke away from traditions which still had a strong hold in literature. It is a pity that for a reason which hardly convinces us he should have thought best to omit the charming stanza, —

"There, scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen are showers of violets found:
The Red-breast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."

When Gray wrote this he doubtless had in mind the ballad of the Children in the Wood. In the succession of English pictures which he does give is that lovely one, —

"For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening's care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the evening kiss to share."

In his poem On a Distant Prospect of Eton College he has lines which are instinct with a feeling for childhood and youth. There is, it is true, a touch of artificiality

in the use made of childhood in this poem, as a foil for tried manhood, its little life treated as the lost golden age of mankind; but that sentiment was a prevailing one in the period.

Goldsmith, whose Bohemianism helped to release him from subservience to declining fashions in literature, treats childhood in a more genuine and artless fashion. In his prose and poetry I hear the first faint notes of that song of childhood which in a generation more was to burst from many lips. The sweetness which trembles in the Deserted Village finds easy expression in forms and images which call up childhood to memory, as in those lines, —

"The playful children just let loose from school,"

. . . . . .

"E'en children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile," —

and in the quaint picture of the village school.

It is in the Vicar of Wakefield, however, that one finds the freest play of fancy about childish figures. Goldsmith says of his hero that "he unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth, — he is a priest, a

husbandman, and the father of a family;" and the whole of the significant preface may lead one to revise the estimate of Goldsmith which his contemporaries have fastened upon English literary history. The waywardness and unconventionality of this man of genius and his eager desire to be accepted by the world, which was then the great world, were the characteristics which most impressed the shallower minds about him. In truth, he had not only an extraordinary sympathy with the ever-varying, ever-constant flux of human life, but he dropped a deeper plummet than any English thinker since Milton.

It was in part his loneliness that threw him upon children for complete sympathy; in part also his prophetic sense, for he had an unerring vision of what constituted the strength and the weakness of England. After the portraiture of the Vicar himself, there are no finer sketches than those of the little children. "It would be fruitless," says the unworldly Vicar, "to deny exultation when I saw my little ones about me;" and from time to time in the tale, the youngest children, Dick and Bill, trot forward in an entirely natural manner. They show an engaging fondness for Mr. Thorn-

hill. "The whole family seemed earnest to please him. . . . My little ones were no less busy, and fondly stuck close to the stranger. All my endeavors could scarcely keep their dirty fingers from handling and tarnishing the lace on his clothes, and lifting up the flaps of his pocket holes to see what was there." The character of Mr. Burchell is largely drawn by its association with the children. The account given by little Dick of the carrying off of Olivia is full of charming childish spirit, and there is an exquisite passage where the Vicar returns home with the news of Olivia's recovery, and discovers his house to be on fire, while in a tumult of confusion the older members of the family rush out of the dwelling.

"I gazed upon them and upon it by turns," proceeds the Vicar, "and then looked round me for my two little ones; but they were not to be seen. O misery! 'Where,' cried I, 'where are my little ones?' 'They are burnt to death in the flames,' says my wife calmly, 'and I will die with them.' That moment I heard the cry of the babes within, who were just awaked by the fire, and nothing could have stopped me. 'Where, where are my children?' cried I,

rushing through the flames, and bursting the door of the chamber in which they were confined. 'Where are my little ones?' 'Here, dear papa, here we are!' cried they together, while the flames were just catching the bed where they lay. I caught them both in my arms, and snatching them through the fire as fast as possible, just as I was got out the roof sunk in. 'Now,' cried I, holding up my children, 'now let the flames burn on, and all my possessions perish. Here they are. I have saved my treasure. Here, my dearest, here are our treasures, and we shall yet be happy.' We kissed our little darlings a thousand times; they clasped us round the neck, and seemed to share our transports, while their mother laughed and wept by turns."

Cowper was more secluded from his time and its influence than Goldsmith, but like him he felt the instinct for a return to the elemental in life and nature. The gentleness of Cowper, combined with a poetic sensibility, found expression in simple themes. His life, led in a pastoral country, and occupied with trivial pleasures, offered him primitive material, and he sang of hares, and goldfish, and children. His Tirocinium, or

a Review of Schools, though having a didactic intention, has some charming bits of descriptive writing, as in the familiar lines which describe the sport of

> "The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot."

The description melts, as do so many of Cowper's retrospections, into a tender melancholy. A deeper note still is struck in his Lines on the Receipt of my Mother's Picture.

The new birth which was coming to England had its premonitions in literature. It had them also in art. In this period appeared Sir Joshua Reynolds and Gainsborough: the one preëminently a painter of humanity, the other of nature, and both of them moved by a spirit of freedom, under well-recognized academic rules. There is in their work a lingering of the old formal character which took sharp account of the diversities of rank, and separated things common from things choice; yet they both belong to the new world rather than to the old, and in nothing is this more remarkable than in the number and character of the children pieces painted by Reynolds. They are a delight to the eye, and in the true

democracy of art we know no distinction between Master Crewe as Henry VIII. and a Boy with a Child on his back and cabbage nets in his hand. What a revelation of childhood is in this great group! There is the tenderness of the Children in the Wood, the peace of the Sleeping Child, where nature itself is in slumber, the timidity of the Strawberry Girl, the wildness of the Gypsy Boy, the shy grace of Pickaback, the delightful wonder of Master Bunbury, the sweet simplicity and innocence in the pictures so named, and the spiritual yet human beauty of the Angels' heads. Reynolds studied the work of the mediæval painters, but he came back to England and painted English children. Goldsmith's Vicar, Cowper's Lines on his mother's portrait, and Reynold's children bring us close to the heart of our subject.

II

It was the saying of the Swedish seer Count Swedenborg, that a Day of Judgment was to come upon men at the time of the French Revolution. Then were the spirits to be judged. In whatever terms we may express the fact, clear it is to us that the close

of the last century marks a great epoch in the history of Christendom, and the farther we withdraw from the events which gather about our own birth as an organized nation, and those which effected such enormous changes in European life, the more clearly do we perceive that the movements of the present century are mainly along lines which may be traced back to genetic beginnings then. There was indeed a great awakening, a renaissance, a new birth.

The French Revolution was a sign of the times: it furnishes a convenient name for an epoch, not merely because important changes in Christendom were contemporaneous with it, but because they were intimately associated with it. Then appeared the portent of Democracy, and the struggle of humanity has ever since been for the realization of dreams which came as visions of a great hope. Then began that examination of the foundation of things in science and philosophy which has become a mighty passion in intellectual life.

I have said that every great renaissance has left its record in the recognition which childhood receives in literature and art. I add that the scope and profundity of that

renaissance may be measured by the form which this recognition takes. At the birth of Christianity the pregnant sentences, "Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," "For of such is the kingdom of heaven," "Verily I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven," sound a depth unreached before. They were, like other words from the same source, veritable prophecies, the perfect fulfillment of which waits the perfect manifestation of the Son of Man. At the Renaissance, when mediævalism gave way before modern life, art reflected the hopes of mankind in the face of a divine child. At the great Revolution, when, amidst fire and blood, the new life of humanity stood revealed, an unseen hand again took a little child and placed him in the midst of men. It was reserved for an English poet to be the one who most clearly discerned the face of the child. Himself one of the great order of angels, he beheld in the child the face of God. I may be pardoned, I trust, for thus reading in Western fashion the meaning of that Oriental phrase which I find has perplexed theologians and Biblical critics. Was it any new disclosure

which the Christ made if he merely said that the attendant ministers of children always beheld the face of the Father in heaven? Was it not the very property of such angelic nature that it should see God? But was it not rather a revelation to the crass minds of those who thrust children aside, that the angels who moved between the Father of spirits and these new-comers into the world saw in their faces a witness to their divine origin? They saw the Father repeated in the child.

When Wordsworth published his Lyrical Ballads, a storm of ridicule fell upon them. In that age, when the old and the new were clashing with each other on every hand, so stark a symbol of the new as these ballads presented could not fail to furnish an objective point for criticism which was born of the old. Wordsworth, in his defensive Preface, declares, "The principal object proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and fur-

ther, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting, by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."

Every one of these reasons, unless the last, which I do not understand, be excepted, applies with additional force to the use of forms and images and incidents drawn from childhood; and though Wordsworth takes

no account of this in his Preface, it is more to the point that he does freely and fully recognize the fact in his poetry. The Preface, with its dry formality, was like much of Wordsworth's poetry, — Pegasus on a walk, his wings impeding free action. It is one of the anomalies of nature that a poet with such insight as Wordsworth should never apparently have discovered his own pragmatical dullness. It seems to me that Wordsworth's finer moods were just those of which he never attempted to give a philosophic account, and that he did not refer to childhood in his Preface is an evidence of his inspiration when dealing with it.

Be this as it may, his treatment of childhood accords with his manifesto to the British public. Could anything be more trivial, as judged by the standards of the day, than his ballad of Alice Fell, or Poverty? — of which he has himself said, "The humbleness, meanness if you like, of the subject, together with the homely mode of treating it, brought upon me a world of ridicule by the small critics, so that in policy I excluded it from many editions of my Poems, till it was restored at the request of some of my friends, in particular my son-in-law, Edward

Quillinan." What is the motive of a poem which excited such derision that the poet in a moment of alarm withdrew it from publication, and when he restored it held his son-in-law responsible? Simply the grief of a poor child, who had stolen a ride behind the poet's post-chaise, upon finding that her tattered cloak had become caught in the wheel and irretrievably ruined. The poet makes no attempt to dignify this grief; the incident is related in poetic form, but without any poetic discovery beyond the simple worth of the grief. It is, perhaps, the most audaciously matter of fact of all Wordsworth's poems; and yet, such is the difference in the audience to-day from what it was in Wordsworth's time that Alice Fell appears as a matter of course in all the anthologies for children, and is read by men and women with positive sympathy, with a tenderness for the forlorn little girl, and without a question as to the poem's right of existence. The misery, the grief of childhood, is conceived of as a real thing, measured by the child's mind into which we enter, and not by our own standards of pain and loss.

Again, recall the poem of Lucy Gray, or Solitude. The story is far more pathetic,

and has an appeal to more catholic sensibility: a child, sent with a lantern to town from the moor on which she lives, that she may light her mother back through the snow, is lost among the hills, and her footsteps are traced at last to the fatal bridge through which she has fallen. The incident was one from real life; Wordsworth seized upon it, reproducing each detail, and with a touch or two of genius made a wraith. He discovered, as no one before had done, the element of solitude in childhood, and invested it with a fine spiritual, ethereal quality, quite devoid of any ethical property, — a subtle community with nature.

How completely Wordsworth entered the mind of a child and identified himself with its movements is consciously betrayed in his pastoral, The Pet Lamb. He puts into the mouth of Barbara Lewthwaite the imaginary song to her lamb, and then says for himself, —

"As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat;
And it seemed, as I retraced the ballad line by line,
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was mine.
Again and once again did I repeat the song;
Nay, said I, more than half to the damsel must belong,

> For she looked with such a look and she spake with such a tone
> That I almost received her heart into my own."

His second thought was best: more than half did belong to the child, for he himself was but the wise interpreter.

Wordsworth's incidents of childhood are sometimes given a purely objective character, as in Rural Architecture, The Anecdote for Fathers, The Idle Shepherd Boys; but more often childhood is to him the occasion and suggestion of the deeper thought of life. A kitten, playing with falling leaves before the poet and his child Dora, leads him on by exquisite movement to the thought of his own decay of life. But what impresses us most is the twofold conception of childhood as a part of nature, and as containing within itself not only the germ of human life, but the echo of the divine. There are poems of surpassing beauty which so blend the child and nature that we might almost fancy, as we look upon the poetical landscape, that we are mistaking children for bushes, or bushes for children. Such is that one beginning

> "Three years she grew in sun and shower,"

and

> "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!"

He drew images from his children and painted a deliberate portrait of his daughter Catharine, solemnly entitled, Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old.

Yet, though Wordsworth drew many suggestions from his own children and from those whom he saw in his walks, it is remarkable how little he regards children in their relation to parents in comparison of their individual and isolated existence. Before Wordsworth, the child, in literature, was almost wholly considered as one of a group, as a part of a family, and only those phases of childhood were treated which were obvious to the most careless observer. Wordsworth — and here is the notable fact — was the first deliberately to conceive of childhood as a distinct, individual element of human life. He first, to use a truer phrase, apprehended the personality of childhood. He did this and gave it expression in artistic form in some of the poems already named; he did it methodically and with philosophic intent in his autobiographic poem The Prelude, and also in The Excursion. Listen how he speaks of his infancy even, giving it by anticipation a life separate from mother and nurse. "Was it for this?" he asks, —

"Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves."

Still more minutely does he disclose the consciousness of childhood in his record of the mind of the Wanderer in The Excursion, in the lines beginning: —

"From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak
In summer tended cattle on the hills."

It may be said that in all this Wordsworth is simply rehearsing and expanding an exceptional experience; that his recollection of his own childhood passed through the alembic of a fervid poetic imagination. Be it so; we are not so much concerned to know how the poet came by this divination, as to know that he should have treated it as universal and common to the period of childhood. Again and again in descriptive poem, in direct address, in indirect allusion, he so

uses this knowledge as to forbid us to regard it as peculiar and exceptional in his own view; and a poet's attestation to a universal experience is worth more than any negation which comes from our individual blurred recollection. Wordsworth discovers in childhood the germ of humanity; he sees there thoughts, emotions, activities, sufferings, which are miniatures of the maturer life, — but, he sees more than this and deeper. To him the child is not a pigmy man; it has a life of its own, out of which something even may pass, when childhood is left behind. It is not the ignorant innocence of childhood, the infantile grace, which holds him, but a certain childish possession, in which he sees a spiritual presence obscured in conscious youth. Landor in one of his Imaginary Conversations stoutly asserts a similar fact when he says, "Children are not men or women; they are almost as different creatures, in many respects, as if they never were to be one or the other; they are as unlike as buds are unlike flowers, and almost as blossoms are unlike fruits."[1]

In all this again, in this echo of the divine which Wordsworth hears in the voice

[1] *Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa.*

of childhood, there is reference, psychologically, to his own personal experience. Yet why should we treat that as ruled out of evidence, which only one here and another there acknowledges as a part of his history? Is it not fairer, more reasonable, to take the experience of a profound poet as the basis of spiritual truth than the negative testimony of those whose eyes lack the wondrous power of seeing? In the preface to his ode, Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of Early Childhood, Wordsworth declares with great earnestness: —

"To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or experiences of my own mind, on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere —

> 'A simple child
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!'

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that my difficulty came, as from

a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times, while going to school, have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from the abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we all have reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character."

Here Wordsworth defends the philosophy of the poem by making it an induction from his own experience. There will be found many to question its truth, because they have no recollections which correspond with the poet's; and others who will claim that the poem is but a fanciful argument in behalf of the philosophic heresy of a preëxistent state. In my judgment, Wordsworth's preface is somewhat misleading by its reference to this theory, although he has furnished

hints in the same preface of his more integral thought. As I have noticed before, his artistic presentation is truer and more final than his exegesis. Whoever reads this great ode is aware of the rise and fall of the tide of thought; he hears the poet reasoning with himself; he sees him passing in imagination out of childhood into age, yet constantly recovering himself to fresh perception of the immortality which transcends earthly life. It is visible childhood with its intimation of immortality which brings to the poet, not regret for what is irretrievably lost, but firmer faith in the reality of the unseen and eternal. The confusion into which some have been cast by the ode arises from their bringing to the idea of immortality the time conception; they conceive the poet to be hinting of an indefinite time antedating the child's birth, an indefinite time extending beyond the man's death, whereas Wordsworth's conception of immortality rests in the indestructibility of spirit by any temporal or earthly conditions, — an indestructibility which even implies an absence of beginning as well as of ending.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy,"

he declares. It is the investment of this visible life by an unseen, unfelt, yet real spiritual presence for which he contends, and he maintains that the inmost consciousness of childhood bears witness to this truth; this consciousness fades as the earthly life penetrates the soul, yet it is there and recurs in sudden moments.

> "Hence in a season of calm weather,
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

In thus connecting childhood with the highest hope of the human race, Wordsworth was repeating the note which twice before had been struck in great epochs of history. This third renaissance was the awaking of the human soul to a sense of the common rights and duties of humanity, the dignity and worth of the Person.

The poetic form, while most perfectly inclosing these divinations of childhood, and especially suited to the presentation of the faint and elusive elements, is less adapted to the philosophic and discursive examination

of the subject of childhood. It is, then, an indication of the impression which the idea had made upon men that a prose writer of the period, of singular insight and subtlety, should have given some of his most characteristic thought to an examination of the essential elements of childhood. De Quincey was undoubtedly strongly affected by Wordsworth's treatment of the subject; he has left evidence upon this point. Nevertheless, he appears to have sounded his own mind and appealed to his own memory for additional and corroborative testimony. In his Suspiria de Profundis, a sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, he offers an account of his recollections of infancy, together with many reflections upon the experience which he then underwent. If it be said that the opium-eater was an untrustworthy witness, since his dreaming might well lead him to confuse the subtle workings of a mature mind with the vivid remembrance of one or two striking events of childhood, we may consider that De Quincey's imagination was a powerful one, and capable of interpreting the incidents and emotions brought to it by memory, as a more prosaic mind could not. We are com-

pelled, of course, in all such cases, to submit the testimony of such a man to the judgment of our own reason, but that reason ought, before pronouncing a final verdict, to be educated to perceive the possibilities of a wider range of observation than may have fallen to us individually, and to submit the results to a comparison with known operations of the human mind. Above all, it should be borne in mind that a distinction clearly exists between a child's consciousness and its power of expression. De Quincey himself in a note says with acuteness and justice: —

"The reader must not forget in reading this and other passages that though a child's feelings are spoken of, it is not the child who speaks. I decipher what the child only felt in cipher. And so far is this distinction or this explanation from pointing to anything metaphysical or doubtful, that a man must be grossly unobservant who is not aware of what I am here noticing, not as a peculiarity of this child or that, but as a necessity of all children. Whatsoever in a man's mind blossoms and expands to his own consciousness in mature life must have preëxisted in germ during his infancy. I, for instance, did not,

as a child, consciously read in my own deep feelings these ideas. No, not at all; nor was it possible for a child to do so. I, the child, had the feelings; I, the man, decipher them. In the child lay the handwriting mysterious to him; in me, the interpretation and the comment."

Assuredly this is reasonable, and since we are looking for the recognition of childhood in literature, we may wisely ask how it presents itself to a man like De Quincey, who had peculiar power in one form of literature — the autobiographic-imaginative. He entitles the first part of his Suspiria, The Affliction of Childhood. It is the record of a child's grief, interpreted by the man when he could translate into speech the emotion which possessed him in his early suffering; and near its close, De Quincey, partially summing up his philosophy of the subject, declares: —

"God speaks to children, also, in dreams and by the oracles that lurk in darkness. But in solitude, above all things when made vocal by the truths and services of a national church, God holds communion undisturbed with children. Solitude, though silent as light, is like light the mightiest of

agencies; for solitude is essential to man. All men come into this world alone; all leave it alone. Even a little child has a dread, whispering consciousness that if he should be summoned to travel into God's presence, no gentle nurse will be allowed to lead him by the hand, nor mother to carry him in her arms, nor little sister to share his trepidations. King and priest, warrior and maiden, philosopher and child, all must walk those mighty galleries alone. The solitude, therefore, which in this world appalls or fascinates a child's heart, is but the echo of a far deeper solitude, through which already he has passed, and of another solitude, deeper still, through which he has to pass; reflex of one solitude, prefiguration of another.

"Deeper than the deepest of solitudes is that which broods over childhood, bringing before it, at intervals, the final solitude which watches for it, within the gates of death. Reader, I tell you in truth, and hereafter I will convince you of this truth, that for a Grecian child solitude was nothing, but for a Christian child it has become the power of God and the mystery of God. O mighty and essential solitude, that

wast and art and art to be! thou, kindling under the touch of Christian revelations, art now transfigured forever, and hast passed from a blank negation into a secret hieroglyphic from God, shadowing in the hearts of infancy the very dimmest of his truths!"

I must refer the reader to the entire chapter for a full exposition of De Quincey's views on this subject. Despite the bravura style, which makes us in our soberer days listen a little incredulously to these far-fetched sighs and breathings, the passage quoted bears testimony to that apprehension of childhood which De Quincey shared with Wordsworth. Both of these writers were looked upon in their day as somewhat reactionary in their poetical philosophy; so much the more valuable is their declaration of a poetical and philosophical faith which was fundamentally in unison with the political faith that lay behind the outburst of the French Revolution. The discovery of this new continent of childhood by such explorers of the spiritual world marks the age as distinctly as does the discovery of new lands and explorations in the earlier renaissance. It was indeed one of the great signs of the

period ushered in by the French Revolution and the establishment of the American republic, that the bounds of the spiritual world were extended. When poverty and childhood were annexed to the poet's domain, the world of literature and art suddenly became larger.

At such times there are likely to be singular exhibitions of genius, which are ill-understood in contemporary life, but are perceived by later observers to be part and parcel of the age in which they occur. Something like this may be said of the pictures and poems of William Blake, who was a visionary in a time when a red flame along the horizon made his spiritual fires invisible. He has since been rediscovered, and has been for a generation so potent an influence in English art that we may wisely attend to him, not merely as a person of genius, but as furnishing an illustration of some of the deep things of our subject.

No one acquainted with Blake's work has failed to observe the recurrence of a few types drawn from elemental figures. The lamb, the child, the old man, — these appear and reappear, carrying the prevalent ideas

in this artist's imagination. Of all these the child is the most central and emphatic, even as the Songs of Innocence is the most perfect expression of Blake's vision of life. It may be said that in his mind childhood was largely resolvable into infancy, and that when he looked upon a babe, he saw life in its purest form, and that most suggestive of the divine, as in the exquisite cradle song, into which is woven the weeping of the child Jesus for all the human race. The two short antithetical poems, The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found, reveal the depths which Blake penetrated when engaged in his solitary voyage of discovery to the little known shores of childhood. They have, to be sure, the teasing property of parables, and it would be hard to render them into the unmistakable language of the understanding; but they could be set to music, and like the Duke we exclaim: —

"That strain again! it had a dying fall."

It must always be borne in mind that Blake's contribution to the literature of childhood is through highly idealized forms. It is spiritual or angelic childhood which floats before his eyes, so that the little

creatures who dance on the green, the little chimney sweep, the children filing into St. Paul's, are translated by his visionary power into the images of an essential childhood; they cease to be individual illustrations.

We are told that in the fearful days of the French Revolution there was an eruption from the secret places of Paris of a vast horde of poor, ignorant, and vicious people, who had been kept out of sight by lords and ladies. One may accept the fact as symbolical of that emergence into the light of Christianity of poverty and degradation. The poor had always been with the world, but it is not too much to say that now for the first time did they begin to be recognized as part and parcel of humanity. Wordsworth's poems set the seal upon this recognition. Dickens's novels naturalized the poor in literature, and, as in the case of Wordsworth, poverty and childhood went hand in hand.

Dickens, however, though he made a distinct addition to the literature of childhood, rather registered a presence already acknowledged than acted as a prophet of childhood. The great beneficent and humanitarian

movement of the century was well under way, and had already found abundant expression in ragged schools and Sunday-schools and in education generally, when Dickens, with his quick reporter's sight, seized upon salient features in this new exhibition of humanity. He was quite aside from the ordinary organized charities, but he was moved by much the same spirit as that which was briskly at work among the poor and the young. He was caught by the current, and his own personal experience was swift to give special direction to his imagination.

Besides innumerable minor references, there are certain childish figures in the multitude of the creations of Dickens, which at once rise to mind, — Paul Dombey, Little Nell, Tiny Tim, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield in his earliest days, and the Marchioness. Dickens found out very soon that the power to bring tears into the eyes of people was a surer road to success than even the power to amuse. When he was drawing the figures of children, their tenderness, their weakness, their susceptibility, presented themselves as the material in which he could skillfully work. Then he used the method

which had served him so well in his larger portraiture; he seized upon the significant feature and emphasized it until it became the unmistakable mark of the person. Childhood suggests weakness, and weakness is more apparent when there is a foil of mental prematurity; so he invented the hydrocephalic Paul Dombey. It suggests tenderness; he appealed to an unhesitating sympathy and drew for us Little Nell, intensifying her nature by bringing her into contrast and subtle companionship with her imbecile grandfather. It is the defect of Dickens that by such characters he displayed his skill in morbid conceptions. The little old man in Paul Dombey is not without its prototype in real life, but Dickens appears to have produced it as a type of tender childhood, much as one might select a consumptive for an illustration of extreme refinement. Tiny Tim is a farther illustration of this unhealthy love, on Dickens's part, of that which is affecting through its infirmity. That art is truest which sees children at play or in their mother's arms, not in hospitals or graveyards. It is the infirmity of humanitarianism and of Dickens, its great exponent, that it regards death as the great fact

of life; that it seeks to ward it off as the greatest of evils, and when it comes, hastens to cover it out of sight with flowers. This conception of death is bound up with an overweening sense of the importance of these years of life. There is a nobler way, and literature and art are slowly confessing it, as they devote their strength to that which is eternal in life, not to that which is perishable. Wordsworth's maiden in We are Seven, with her simple, unhesitating belief in the continuity of life, the imperishability of the person, holds a surer place in literature than Paul Dombey, who makes the ocean with its tides wait for him to die.

It is only fair to say, however, that the caricature to be found in Dickens is scarcely more violent an extreme to some minds than is the idealism to be found in Wordsworth, De Quincey, and Blake an opposite extreme to minds otherwise constituted. The early life of Wordsworth, passed, as he tells us, in the solitude of nature, explains much of his subsequent attitude toward childhood and youth. It is out of such an experience that Lucy Gray was written. In like manner the early life of Dickens discloses something of a nature which reappears afterward

in his pictures of childhood. A wounded sensibility is unquestionably the pathetic history of many, and Dickens has contributed to the natural history of childhood a distinct account of this feature.

The first appearance of a new form in literature produces an impression which can never be repeated. However freshly readers in this decade may come to the works of Dickens, it is impossible that they should have the same distinct sensation which men and women had who caught up the numbers of The Old Curiosity Shop as they fell from the press for the first time. There can never again be such a lamentation over Little Nell, when men like Jeffrey, a hardened old critic, made no concealment of their tears. Yet I am disposed to think that this does not give a complete account of the phenomenon. Just as Wordsworth's Alice Fell is now but one of a procession of forlorn maidens, though at the head of it, so the children of Dickens are merely somewhat more vivid personages in a multitude of childish creation. The child is no longer a novelty either in poetry or in fiction. It is an accepted character, one of the *dramatis personæ* of literature.

For, when all is said of Dickens's work, taken only as the product of a mind singularly gifted with reporting what it has seen, there remains the noticeable fact that scarcely had the echoes died away from the voice of Wordsworth, who ushered in the literature of the new age, when a great man of the people came forward, in the person of Dickens, and found it the most natural thing in the world to give men pictures of child-life, and that after the first surprise attendant upon novelty was over, writers of all sorts were busy modeling these small figures.

The child once introduced into literature, the significance of its appearance thereafter is not so much in individual instances as in the general and familiar acceptance of the phenomenon. At least, so it appears from our near view. It is not impossible that later students may perceive notes in our literature of more meaning than we now surmise. They may understand better than we why Tennyson should have made a babe the heroine of The Princess, as he acknowledges to Mr. Dawson that he did, though only one or two critics had discovered the fact, and why Mr. Swinburne, who is supposed to

scoff at a literature *virginibus puerisque*, should have devoted so much of his lyric energy to childhood. The stream which ran with so broken a course down to Wordsworth has spread now into a broad, full river. Childhood is part and parcel of every poet's material; children play in and out of fiction, and readers are accustomed to meeting them in books, and to finding them often as finely discriminated by the novelist as are their elders.

Meanwhile, from the time when childhood was newly discovered, that is to say, roughly, in the closing years of the last century, there has been a literature in process of formation which has for its audience children themselves. I called attention briefly, at the beginning of this study, to the interesting fact that there was a correlation in time, at least, between childhood in literature and a literature for children. A nearer study of the literature of this century shows very clearly that while the great constructive artists have been making room for the figures of infancy and youth, and even consciously explaining their presence, a host of minor writers, without much thought of art, have been busy over the same figures for other purposes.

Not only so, but in several instances the great artists themselves have distinctly turned aside from their ordinary audience and appealed directly to children.

Where was the child in English literature before Goldsmith? and where before Goldsmith's time was there a book for children? There have been, it is true, nursery tales in all ages: ditties, and songs, and lullabies; unwritten stories, which mothers in England told when they themselves could have read nothing; but there came a time when children were distinctly recognized as the occasion of formal literature, when authors and publishers began to heed a new public. It was impossible that there should be this discovery of childhood without a corresponding effort on the part of men and women to get at it, and to hold direct intercourse with it.

By a natural instinct, writers for children began at once to write about children. They were moved by educational rather than by artistic impulses, so that their creations were subordinate to the lessons which they conveyed. During the period when Wordsworth, Lamb, De Quincey, and Blake were idealizing childhood, and seeing in it artistic possibilities, there flourished a school of

writing for the young which also dealt with childhood, but with a sturdy realism. This school had its representatives in Mrs. Barbauld, Mr. Day, the Aikens, Maria Edgeworth, Ann and Jane Taylor, and holds a place still with Evenings at Home, The Parent's Assistant, Hymns in Prose for Children, Hymns for Infant Minds, Frank, and Sandford and Merton. The characteristics of this literature are simple, and will be recalled by many who dwell with an affectionate and regretful regard upon books which they find it somewhat difficult to persuade their children to read.

These books were didactic; they assumed in the main the air of wise teachers; they were sometimes condescending; they appealed to the understanding rather than to the imagination of the child, and they abounded in stores of useful information upon all manner of subjects. They contained precursors of a long series of juvenile monitors, and the grandfathers who knew Mr. Barlow had children who knew Mr. Holiday, Rollo, Jonas, and Mr. George, and grandchildren who may be suspected of an acquaintance with Mr. Bodley and his much traveled and very inquisitive family.

Yet, the earlier works, though now somewhat antiquated, were not infrequently lively and even humorous in their portraiture of children. They were written in the main out of a sincere interest in the young, and by those who were accustomed to watch the unfolding of childish nature. If they reflected a somewhat formal relation between the old and the young, it must be remembered that the actual relation was a formal one; that the young had not yet come into familiar and genial relation with the old. Indeed, the books themselves were somewhat revolutionary in a small way. Much that seems stiff and even unnatural to us now was quite easy and colloquial to their first readers, and in their eagerness to lure children into ways of pleasant instruction, the authors broke down something of the reserve which existed between fathers and sons in the English life which they portrayed. Yet we cannot help being struck by the contrast between the sublimated philosophy of Wordsworth and the prosaic applications of the Edgeworth school. Heaven lies about us in our infancy? Oh, yes, a heaven that is to be looked at through a spy-glass and explained by means of a

home-made orrery. It would seem as if the spirit of childhood had been discerned with all its inherent capacity, but that the actual children of this matter-of-fact world had not yet been fairly seen by the light of this philosophy.

The literature which we are considering was indeed a serious attempt at holding intercourse with childish minds. It had the embarrassment of beginnings; there was about it an uncertain groping in the dark of childhood, and it was desperately theory-ridden. But it had also the mark of sincerity, and one feels in reading it that the writers were genuinely indifferent in most cases to the figure they might be cutting before the world; they were bent upon reaching this audience, and were unobservant of the larger world behind. In most cases, I say. I suspect that Mrs. Barbauld, with her solemn dullness, was the victim of a notion that she was producing a new order of literature, and in this she was encouraged by a circle of older readers; the children probably stared at her with sufficient calmness to keep her ignorant of their real thoughts.

How real literature looked upon the dusty

high-road laid out across the fields by some of these writers may be read in the letters of the day. Coleridge jibed at that "pleonasm of nakedness," Mrs. Bare-bald, and Lamb in a letter to Coleridge speaks his mind with refreshing frankness: "Goody Two Shoes," he says, "is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; and the shopman at Newberry's hardly deigned to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf when Mary asked for them. Mrs. B.'s and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. B.'s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learned that a horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a horse, and such like; instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think of what you would have been now, if, instead of being fed with tales and

old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history! Hang them! I mean the cursed reasoning crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child." Yet Lamb and his sister both took a lively interest in genuine books for the young, and their own contributions have, alas! gone the way, for the most part, of other worn-out literature. It was mainly as a direct educative power that this new interest in children first found expression; with it, however, was mingled a more artistic purpose, and the two streams of tendency have ever since been recognizable, sometimes separate, oftener combined. The Lambs' own work was illustrative of this union of the didactic and the artistic. It is outside the scope of this study to dwell at length upon this phase of literature. It is enough to point out the fact that there is a distinct class of books which has grown up quite within the memory of men now living. It is involved with industrial and commercial interests; it invites the attention of authors, and the infrequent criticism of reviewers; it has its own subdivisions like the larger literature; it boasts of cyclopædias and commentaries;

it includes histories, travels, poems, works in science, theological treatises. It is a distinct principality of the Kingdom of Letters. It is idle to complain of the present abundance of children's books, as if somebody were to blame for it. There has been no conspiracy of publishers and authors. It is worse than folly to look with contempt upon the movement; the faithful student will seek rather to study this new force, and if possible to guide it into right channels.

The distinction between books for the young and books for the old is a somewhat arbitrary one, and many have discovered for themselves and their children that instead of one poor corner of literature being fenced off for the lamb, planted with tender grass which is quickly devoured, and with many medicinal but disagreeable herbs which are nibbled at when the grass is gone, the whole wide pasture land is their native home, and the grass more tender where fresh streams flow than it possibly can be in the paddock, however carefully planted and watched. This community of possession is more recognizable in the higher than in the lower forms of literature. It is still more clear in

pictorial art. Art is by its nature more closely representative of childhood than literature can be, and Gainsborough and Reynolds made no innovation when they painted children, although the latter, by his evident partiality for these subjects, does indicate a susceptibility to the new knowledge which was coming upon the world. There are other influences which reinforce the artistic pleasure, such as the domestic sense, the pride of family, the ease of procuring unconscious models. No one can visit an English exhibition of paintings without being struck by the extraordinary number of subjects taken from childhood. It is in this field that Millais has won famous laurels, and when the great body of book illustrations is scanned, what designs have half the popularity of Doyle's fairies and Miss Greenaway's idyllic children? I sometimes wonder why this should be the case in England, when in America, the paradise of children, there is a conspicuous absence of these subjects from galleries.

VII

IN FRENCH AND GERMAN LITERATURE

I

FRENCH literature before the Revolution was more barren of reference to childhood than was English literature. Especially is this true of the eighteenth century, with its superficial disbelief and its bitter protest against superstition, under which term was comprehended the supernatural as well as the preternatural. There were exceptions, as in the case of Fénelon, and the constitutional sentiment of the French was easily moved by the appeal of dependent childhood. In Rousseau one may read how it is possible to weep over children, and yet leave one's own to the cold mercy of a foundling asylum. It is in Rousseau's disciple, however, Bernardin de St. Pierre, that we find the most artistic expression of pure sentimentalism, and the story of Paul and Virginia is an effort at representing a world where childhood, in its innocence, is con-

ceived of as the symbol of ideal human life. St. Pierre thought of childhood and nature as possessed of strong negative virtues; they were uncontaminated, they were unsophisticated. To escape from an evil world, he fled in imagination to an island of the tropics, where all that life required was readily furnished by lavish nature. He makes his family to consist chiefly of women and children. The masculine element is avoided as something disturbing, and except for the harmless old man who acts as chorus, it is discovered first as a rude, barbaric, and cruel force in the person of the governor of the island, who has no faith in Madame de la Tour, and in the person of the planter at the Black River, who has been an inhuman master to his slave.

The childhood of Paul and Virginia is made to have a pastoral, idyllic character. Their sorrows and misfortunes come wholly from evils which lie beyond their control. St. Pierre brought back a golden age by ignoring the existence of evil in the heart of man; he conceived it possible to construct an ideal world by what was vaguely expressed in the words "a return to nature." As he reflects in the story: "Their theology

consisted in sentiment like that of nature; and their morality in action like that of the gospel. Those families had no particular days devoted to pleasure, and others to sadness. Every day was to them a holiday, and all which surrounded them one holy temple, where they forever adored an Infinite Intelligence, almighty and the friend of humankind. A sentiment of confidence in his supreme power filled their minds with consolation for the past, with fortitude for the present, and with hope for the future. Behold how these women, compelled by misfortune to return to a state of nature, had unfolded in their own bosoms, and in those of their children, the feelings which nature gives us, our best support under evil!"

However we may discover the limitations of the sentimental philosophy, and its inadequacy when brought face to face with evil in life, there is a surface agreement with Christianity in this instinctive turning to childhood as the hope of the world. Yet the difference is radical. The child, in the Christian conception, holds the promise of things to come; in the conception of French sentiment of the Rousseau and St. Pierre type, the child is a refuge from present evil,

a mournful reminiscence of a lost Paradise. If only we could keep it a child! is the cry of this school, — keep it from knowing this wicked, unhappy world! But alas! there are separations and shipwrecks. Virginia is washed ashore by the cruel waves. Paul, bereft of reason, dies, and is buried in the same grave. The two, growing like plants in nature, are stricken down by the mysterious, fateful powers of nature.

The contrast between this unreal recourse to nature and the strong yet subtle return which characterizes Wordsworth and his school is probably more apparent to the English and American mind than to the French. Yet a reasonable comparison betrays the fatal weakness of the one in that it leaves out of view whatever in nature disturbs a smooth, summer-day world. When St. Pierre talks of a return to nature, he does not mean the jungle and the pestiferous swamp; he regards these as left behind in Paris. Yet the conclusion of his story is the confession wrung from faithful art that Nature is after all but a stepmother to humanity.

In the great romantic movement which revolutionized French literature, an immense

impetus was given to the mind, and literature thenceforth reflected a wider range of thought and feeling. In few respects does this appear more significantly than in the treatment of childhood. There is a robustness about the sentiment which separates it from the earlier regard of such writers as we have named. Lamartine, who certainly was not devoid of sentiment, passes by his own earliest childhood in Les Confidences with indifference. "I shall not," he says, "follow the example of J. J. Rousseau in his Confessions. I shall not relate to you the trifling events of my early childhood. Man only dates from the commencement of feeling and thought; until the man is a being, he is not even a child. . . . Let us leave, then, the cradle to the nurses, and our first smiles, our first tears, and our first lisping accents to the ecstasies of our mothers. I do not wish to inflict on you any but my earliest recollections, embellished by the light of reason." He gives, accordingly, two scenes of his childhood: one an interior, where his father reads aloud to his mother from Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered; the other an outdoor scene, where he engages in the rural sports of the neighborhood. Each

picture is delightfully drawn, with minute detail, with poetic touch, with affectionate recollection. Encouraged, apparently, by the warmth which this memory has inspired, Lamartine continues to dwell upon the images of his childhood, especially as it has to do with the thought of his mother. He paints the simple garden attached to his father's home, and resting a moment reflects: —

"Yes, that is indeed all, and yet that is what sufficed during so many years for the gratification, for the reveries, for the sweet leisures, and for the as sweet labors of a father, a mother, and eight children! Such is what still suffices, even at the present day, for the nourishment of these recollections. Such is the Eden of their childhood, where their most serene thoughts take refuge when they wish to receive a little of that dew of the morning life, a little of that beaming light of early dawn, which shines pure and radiant for man only amid the scenes of his birth. There is not a tree, there is not a carnation, there is not a mossy stone of this garden, which is not entwined in their soul as if it formed part of it. This nook of earth seems to us immense, such a host of

objects and of recollections does it contain for us in so narrow a space."

The fullness with which Lamartine treats the recollection of his youth partakes of the general spirit of French memoirs, — a spirit, to speak roughly, which regards persons rather than institutions, — but indicates also something of the new spirit which informed literature when it elevated childhood into a place of real dignity. There are passages, indeed, which have a special significance as intimating a consciousness of the deeper relations of childhood. Michelet, for instance, in his philosophy of the unfolding of woman's life, recognizes the characteristics of maidenhood as anticipatory of maturity, and does it with so serious a contemplation that we forget to smile when we discover him profoundly observant of those instincts of maternity which are shown in the care of a child for its doll.

This attitude toward the child is observable in the masters of modern French literature. However far they may be removed from any mere domestic regard of the subject, they apprehend the peculiar sacredness attaching to children. Alfred de Musset, for example, though by no means a poet of

the family, can never speak of children without emotion. Not to multiply instances, it is enough to take the great poet of the period. Victor Hugo deserves, it has been said, to be called the poet of infancy, not only for the reason that he has written of the young freely, but has in his Les Enfants, Livre des Mères, written for them. It is to be observed that the suggestion comes, with Hugo, chiefly from the children of his family; from his brother Eugène, who died an early death; from his daughter, whom he mourns in tender verse; and from his grandchildren. One feels the sincerity of a great poet when he draws the inspiration for such themes from his own familiar kind.

It may be said in general of the contribution made to this literature by the French that it partakes of those qualities of lightness and grace which mark the greater literature; that the image of childhood is a joyous, innocent one, and satisfies the eye that looks for beauty and delicacy. Sentiment predominates, but it is a sentiment that makes little draught upon thought. There is a disposition now to regard children as dolls and playthings, the amusement of the

hour; now to make them the object of an attitudinizing sentiment, which is practically wasted unless there be some one at hand to applaud it.

II

When we pass from France to Germany we are aware that, however we may use the same terms, and recognize the existence of sentiment as a strong element in the literature of both countries, there is a radical difference in tone. It is not merely that French sentiment is graceful and German sentiment clumsy: the grace of the one connects itself with a fine art, — we feel an instinctive good taste in its expression; in the other, the awkwardness, the obtrusiveness, seem to be the issue of an excess of natural and homely feeling. It would be too much to say that French sentiment is insincere and German sentiment unpleasantly sincere; that the one is assumed and the other uncalculating, — we cannot thus dismiss elementary feeling in two great peoples. But an Englishman or American, to whom, in his reserve, the sentiment of either nation is apt to be a little oppressive, is very likely to smile at the French and feel uncomfortable in the presence of the Ger-

man; to regard the French feeling as a temporary mood, the German as a permanent state.

Be this as it may, it is true that the German feeling with regard to childhood, as it finds expression in life and literature, revolves very closely about the child in its home, not the child as a charming object in nature. Childhood, in German literature, is conceived very generally in its purely domestic relations, and is so positive an element as to have attracted the attention of other nations, and even to have given rise to a petty cult. Coleridge, writing from Germany in 1799, reports to his English readers, as something strange to himself, and of local significance only, the custom of Christmas gifts from parents to children and from children to parents. He is especially struck with the custom of representing these presents as coming from Jesus Christ.

The whole structure of Santa Claus and Kriss Kringle, the Christ Child and Pelznichel, with the attendant ceremonies of the Christmas tree, is built into the child life of Germany and the Low Countries; and it is by the energy of this childish miracle that it has passed over into English, and especially

into American life. All this warmth of domestic feeling is by no means a modern discovery. It is a prime characteristic of the Germanic people, and one strong reason for the ascendency of Lutheranism may be found in the singular exposition of the German character which Luther presented. He was not merely a man of the people; through his life and writings and organizing faculty he impressed himself positively on the German national character, not turning it aside, but deepening the channels in which it ran. Certain it is that the luxuriance of his nature was almost riotous on the side of family life. "The leader of the age," says Canon Mozley, "and the adviser of princes, affecting no station and courting no great men, was externally one of the common crowd, and the plainest of it. In domestic life the same heart and nature appear. There he overflows with affection, warmth, tenderness; with all the amiable banter of the husband, and all the sweet arts and pretty nonsense of a father among his little children. Whether he is joking, lecturing his 'rib Catharine,' his 'gracious dame Catharine,' or writing a description of fairyland and horses with silver saddles to his 'vora-

cious, bibacious, loquacious,' little John; or whether he is in the agony of grief over the death-bed of his favorite daughter, Magdalene, we see the same exuberant, tender character." [1]

In this sketch of Luther we may read some of the general characteristics of the Germanic life, and we are ready, at the first suggestion, to assent to the proposition that the German people, judged by the apparatus of childhood, books, pictures, toys, and schools, stands before other nations. The material for the portraiture of childhood has been abundant; the social history, the biographies, give constant intimations of the fullness with which family life, inclosing childhood, has been dwelt upon in the mind. The autobiographies of poets and novelists almost invariably give great attention to the period of childhood. A very interesting illustration of this may be found in the life of Richter, who stands at the head of the great Germans in his portrayal of childhood.

"Men who have a firm hold on nothing else," says Richter in his brief autobiography, "delight in deep, far-reaching recollec-

[1] *Essays, Historical and Theological.* By J. B. Mozley, i. 430, 431.

tion of their days of childhood, and in this billowy existence they anchor on that, far more than on the thought of later difficulties. Perhaps for two reasons: that in this retrospection they press nearer to the gate of life guarded by spiritual existences; and secondly, that they hope, in the spiritual power of an earlier consciousness, to make themselves independent of the little, contemptible annoyances that surround humanity." He then recites an incident from his second year, and continues: "This little morning-star of earliest recollection stands yet tolerably clear in its low horizon, but growing paler as the daylight of life rises higher. And now I remember only this clearly, that in earlier life I remembered everything clearly."

How clearly will be apparent to the reader who follows Richter through the minute and detailed narrative of his childish life, and in his writings the images of this early life are constantly reappearing under different forms. Something is no doubt due to the early birth in Richter of a self-consciousness, bred in part by the solitude of his life. It may be said with some assurance that the vividness of early recollection has much to do with de-

termining the poet and novelist and essayist in his choice of themes bearing directly upon childhood. The childish experience of Wordsworth, De Quincey, Dickens, Lamartine, and Richter is clearly traceable in the writings of these men. If they look into their own hearts and write, the images which they bring forth are so abundantly of childhood that they cannot avoid making use of them, especially since they retain recollections which demand the interpretation of the maturer mind. That they should so freely draw from this storehouse of childish experience reflects also the temper of the age for which they write. The fullness with which the themes of childhood are treated means not that a few men have suddenly discovered the subject, but that all are sensitive to these same impressions.

It is not, however, the vividness of recollection alone, but the early birth of consciousness, which will determine the treatment of the subject. If one remember the facts of his early years rather than how he thought and felt about those facts, he will be less inclined to dwell upon the facts afterward, or make use of them in his work. They will have little significance to him. A

distinction in this view is to be observed between Richter and Goethe. The autobiographies of the two men reveal the different impressions made upon them by their childhood. The facts which Goethe recalls are but little associated with contemporaneous reflection upon the facts, and they serve but a trifling purpose in Goethe's art. The facts which Richter recalls are imbedded in a distinct conception regarding them, and perform a very positive function in his art.

The character of Mignon may be dismissed from special consideration, for it is clear that Goethe used Mignon's diminutiveness and implied youth only to heighten the effect of her elfish and dwarfish nature. The most considerable reference to childhood is perhaps in the Sorrows of Young Werther, where the relations between Werther and Charlotte comprise a sketchy group of children who act as foils or accompaniments to the pair. Werther discovers Charlotte, it will be remembered, cutting slices of bread for her younger brothers and sisters; it is by this means that Goethe would give a charm to the character, presenting it in its homely, domestic setting. But his purpose is also to intimate the exceeding

sensibility of Werther, and he represents him as taking a most affectionate interest in the little children whom he sees on his walks. I suspect, indeed, that Goethe in this has distinctly borrowed from the Vicar of Wakefield; at any rate, the comparison is easily suggested, and one brings away the impression of Goldsmith's genuine feeling and of Goethe's deliberate assumption of a feeling for artistic purposes. Nevertheless, Goethe makes very positive use of childhood in this novel, not only through the figures of children, but also through the sentiment of childhood.

"Nothing on this earth, my dear Wilhelm," says Werther, "affects my heart so much as children. When I consider them; when I mark in the little creatures the seeds of all those virtues and qualities which they will one day find so indispensable; when I behold in the obstinate all the future firmness and constancy of a noble character, in the capricious that levity and gayety of temper which will carry them lightly over the dangers and troubles of life, their whole nature simple and unpolluted, then I call to mind the golden words of the Great Teacher of mankind: 'Except ye become as little

children.' And now, my friend, these children, who are our equals, whom we ought to consider as our models, we treat as subjects. They are allowed no will of their own! And have we then none ourselves? Whence comes our exclusive right? Is it because we are older and more experienced? Great God! from the height of thy heaven, thou beholdest great children and little children, and no others; and thy Son has long since declared which afford the greatest pleasure. But they believe in him, and hear him not, — that too is an old story; and they train their children after their own image."

We must regard this as a somewhat distorted application of the words of the gospel, but it is interesting as denoting that Goethe also, who stood so much in the centre of illumination, had perceived the revealing light to fall upon the heads of young children. It is not, however, so much by his direct as by his indirect influence that Goethe is connected with our subject. If Luther was both an exponent of German feeling and a determining cause of its direction, Goethe occupies a similar relation as an expression of German intellectualism and a stimulator of German thought. A hundred years after

his birth, when measures were taking to celebrate the centenary by the establishment of some educational foundation to bear his name, the enthusiastic supporters of Froebel sought to divert public interest into the channel of this movement for the cultivation of childhood. Froebel's philosophy has affected modern educational systems even where his method has not been scrupulously followed. Its influence upon literature and art can scarcely be traced, except so far as it has tended to give direction and set limits to the great body of books and pictures, which, made for children, are also expository and illustrative of the life of children. I mention him simply as an additional illustration of the grasp which the whole subject of childhood has obtained in Germany; it has made itself felt in religion and politics; so revolutionary was Froebel's philosophy held to be that his schools were suppressed at one time by the government as tending to subvert the state. This was not strange, since Froebel's own view as to the education of children was radical and comprehensive.

A child's life finds its chief expression in play, and in play its social instincts are developed. Now the kindergarten recog-

nizes the fact that play is the child's business, not his recreation, and undertakes to guide and form the child through play. It converts that which would otherwise be aimless or willful into creative, orderly, and governed action. Out of the play as governed by the wise kindergartner grows a spirit of courtesy, self-control, forbearance, unselfishness. The whole force of the education is directed toward a development of the child which never forgets that he is a person in harmonious relation to others. Community, not competition, is the watchword of the school. In this view the kindergarten has its basis in the same law which lies at the foundation of a free republic. Obedience, as taught by the system of public schools, is an obedience to rules; it may be likened to the obedience of the soldier, — a noble thing, but not the highest form of human subjection of the will. Obedience as evolved in the true kindergarten is a conscious obedience to law. The unity of life in the school, with entire freedom of development in the individual, is the aim of the kindergarten.

The enthusiasm which made itself felt in France in the rise of the romantic school,

with its expression chiefly through poetry, the drama, and fiction, disclosed its power likewise in Germany. There, however, other channels offered a course for the new current. The rise of the school of religious painters, of which Overbeck and Cornelius were eminent examples, was a distinct issue of the movement of the times. It was regarded as reactionary by some, but its reaction was rather in form than in spirit. It ran counter to a Philistinism which was complacent and indifferent to spiritual life, and it sought to embody its ideas in forms which not only Philistinism but humanism contemned, yet it was all the while working in the interest of a higher freedom. It is noticeable, therefore, that this religious art, in its choice of subjects, not only resorted to the early ecclesiological type, but struck out into a new path, choosing themes which imply a subjective view of Christianity. Thus, Overbeck's picture of Christ blessing little children, a subject which is a favorite one of modern religious art, is a distinct recognition of modern sentiment. Here is the relation borne by the Christ to little children presented by a religious art, which, however much it might seek to reinstate the

old forms, could not help being affected by the new life of Christianity. Overbeck went to the early Florentines for his masters, but he did not find this subject among their works. He caught it from the new reading of the old gospel.

VIII

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

As Overbeck and his school returned to the religious art which preceded the Renaissance, so Thorwaldsen, like Canova and lesser men, turned back to Greek art, and was working contemporaneously with Overbeck at Rome in a very different temper. To him the central figure of Christianity was not a child in its mother's arms, but a strong, thoughtful man; for childhood he turned to the sportive conception of Amor, which he embodied in a great variety of forms. The myth appealed, aside from the opportunity which it offered for the expression of sensuous beauty, to his northern love of fairyland. His countryman, Andersen, tells us how, when they were all seated in the dusk, Thorwaldsen would come from his work and beg for a fairy-tale.

It is Andersen himself who has made the most unique contribution not only to the literature which children read, but to that

which is illustrative of childhood. He attained his eminence sheerly by the exhibition of a power which resulted from his information by the spirit of childhood. He was not only an interpreter of childhood; he was the first child who made a real contribution to literature. The work by which he is best known is nothing more nor less than an artistic creation of precisely the order which is common among children.

It is customary to speak of his best known short stories as fairy tales; wonder-stories is in some respects a more exact description, but the name has hardly a native sound. Andersen himself classed his stories under the two heads of *historier* and *eventyr*; the *historier* corresponds well enough with its English mate, being the history of human action, or, since it is a short history, the story; the *eventyr*, more nearly allied perhaps to the German *abenteuer* than to the English *adventure*, presumes an element of strangeness causing wonder, while it does not necessarily demand the machinery of the supernatural. When we speak of fairy tales, we have before our minds the existence, for artistic purposes, of a spiritual world peopled with beings that exercise themselves in

human affairs, and are endowed in the main with human attributes, though possessed of certain ethereal advantages, and generally under orders from some superior power, often dimly understood as fate; the Italians, indeed, call the fairy *fata*. In a rough way we include under the title of fairies all the terrible and grotesque shapes as well, and this world of spiritual beings is made to consist of giants, ogres, brownies, pixies, nisses, gnomes, elves, and whatever other creatures have found in it a local habitation and name. The fairy itself is generally represented as very diminutive, the result, apparently, of an attempted compromise between the imagination and the senses, by which the existence of fairies for certain purposes is conceded on condition they shall be made so small that the senses may be excused from recognizing them.

The belief in fairies gave rise to the genuine fairy tale, which is now an acknowledged classic, and the gradual elimination of this belief from the civilized mind has been attended with some awkwardness. These creations of fancy — if we must so dismiss them — had secured a somewhat positive recognition in literature before it was finally

discovered that they came out of the unseen and therefore could have no life. Once received into literature they could not well be ignored, but the understanding, which appears to serve as special police in such cases, now has orders to admit no new-comers unless they answer to one of three classes: either they must be direct descendants of the fairies of literature, having certain marks about them to indicate their parentage, or they must be teachers of morality thus disguised, or they may be mere masqueraders; one thing is certain, they must spring from no belief in fairy life, but be one and all referred to some sufficient cause, — a dream, a moral lesson, a chemical experiment. But it is found that literature has its own sympathies, not always compassed by the mere understanding, and the consequence is that the sham fairies in the sham fairy tales never really get into literature at all, but disappear in limbo; while every now and then a genuine fairy, born of a genuine, poetic belief, secures a place in spite of the vigilance of the guard.

Perhaps nothing has done more to vulgarize the fairy than its introduction upon the stage; the charm of the fairy tale is in its

divorce from human experience; the charm of the stage is in its realization, in miniature, of human life. If the frog is heard to speak, if the dog is turned before one's eyes into a prince, by having cold water dashed over it, the charm of the fairy tale has fled, and in its place we have only the perplexing pleasure of legerdemain. The effect of producing these scenes upon the stage is to bring them one step nearer to sensuous reality, and one step further from imaginative reality; and since the real life of fairy is in the imagination, a wrong is committed when it is dragged from its shadowy hiding-place and made to turn into ashes under the calcium light of the understanding.

By a tacit agreement fairy tales have come to be consigned to the nursery; the old tools of superstition have become the child's toys, and when a writer comes forward, now, bringing new fairy tales, it is almost always with an apology, not for trespassing upon ground already occupied, but for indulging in what is no longer belief, but make-belief. "My story," he is apt to say, "is not true; we none of us believe it, and I shall give you good evidence before I am done that least of all do I believe it. I shall probably

explain it by referring it to a strange dream, or shall justify it by the excellent lesson it is to teach. I adopt the fairy form as suited to the imagination of children; it is a childish thing, and I am half ashamed, as a grown person, to be found engaged in such nonsense." Out of this way of regarding fairy tales has come that peculiar monstrosity of the times, the scientific fairy tale, which is nothing short of an insult to a whole race of innocent beings. It may be accepted as a foregone conclusion that with a disbelief in fairies the genuine fairy tale has died, and that it is better to content ourselves with those stories which sprang from actual belief, telling them over to successive generations of children, than to seek to extend the literature by any ingenuity of modern skepticism. There they are, the fairy tales without authorship, as imperishable as nursery ditties; scholarly collections of them may be made, but they will have their true preservation, not as specimens in a museum of literary curiosities, but as children's toys. Like the sleeping princess in the wood, the fairy tale may be hedged about with bristling notes and thickets of commentaries, but the child will pass straight to the beauty,

and awaken for his own delight the old charmed life.

It is worth noting, then, that just when historical criticism, under the impulse of the Grimms, was ordering and accounting for these fragile creations, — a sure mark that they were ceasing to exist as living forms in literature, — Hans Christian Andersen should have come forward as master in a new order of stories, which may be regarded as the true literary successor to the old order of fairy tales, answering the demands of a spirit which rejects the pale ghost of the scientific or moral or jocular or pedantic fairy tale. Andersen, indeed, has invented fairy tales purely such, and has given form and enduring substance to traditional stories current in Scandinavia; but it is not upon such work that his real fame rests, and it is certain that while he will be mentioned in the biographical dictionaries as the writer of novels, poems, romances, dramas, sketches of travel, and an autobiography, he will be known and read as the author of certain short stories, of which the charm at first glance seems to be in the sudden discovery of life and humor in what are ordinarily regarded as inanimate objects, or what are

somewhat compassionately called dumb animals. When we have read and studied the stories further, and perceived their ingenuity and wit and humane philosophy, we can after all give no better account of their charm than just this, that they disclose the possible or fancied parallel to human life carried on by what our senses tell us has no life, or our reason assures us has no rational power.

The life which Andersen sets before us is in fact a dramatic representation upon an imaginary stage, with puppets that are not pulled by strings, but have their own muscular and nervous economy. The life which he displays is not a travesty of human life, it is human life repeated in miniature under conditions which give a charming and unexpected variety. By some transmigration, souls have passed into tin-soldiers, balls, tops, beetles, money-pigs, coins, shoes, leap-frogs, matches, and even such attenuated individualities as darning-needles; and when, informing these apparently dead or stupid bodies, they begin to make manifestations, it is always in perfect consistency with the ordinary conditions of the bodies they occupy, though the several objects become by

this endowment of souls suddenly expanded in their capacity. Perhaps in nothing is Andersen's delicacy of artistic feeling better shown than in the manner in which he deals with his animated creations when they are brought into direct relations with human beings. The absurdity which the bald understanding perceives is dexterously suppressed by a reduction of all the factors to one common term. For example, in his story of The Leap-Frog, he tells how a flea, a grasshopper and a leap-frog once wanted to see which could jump highest, and invited the whole world "and everybody else besides who chose to come," to see the performance. The king promised to give his daughter to the one who jumped the highest, for it was stale fun when there was no prize to jump for. The flea and the grasshopper came forward in turn and put in their claims; the leap-frog also appeared, but was silent. The flea jumped so high that nobody could see where he went to, so they all asserted that he had not jumped at all; the grasshopper jumped in the king's face, and was set down as an ill-mannered thing; the leap-frog, after reflection, leaped into the lap of the princess, and thereupon the king said, "There is nothing

above my daughter; therefore to bound up to her is the highest jump that can be made: but for this, one must possess understanding, and the leap-frog has shown that he has understanding. He is brave and intellectual." "And so," the story declares, "he won the princess." The barren absurdity of a leap-frog marrying a princess is perhaps the first thing that strikes the impartial reader of this abstract, and there is very likely something offensive to him in the notion; but in the story itself this absurdity is so delightfully veiled by the succession of happy turns in the characterization of the three jumpers, as well as of the old king, the house-dog, and the old councilor "who had had three orders given him to make him hold his tongue," that the final impression upon the mind is that of a harmonizing of all the characters, and the king, princess, and councilor can scarcely be distinguished in kind from the flea, grasshopper, leap-frog, and house-dog. After that, the marriage of the leap-frog and princess is quite a matter of course.

The use of speaking animals in story was no discovery of Andersen's, and yet in the distinction between his wonder-story and the well-known fable lies an explanation of the

charm which attaches to his work. The end of every fable is *hæc fabula docet*, and it was for this palpable end that the fable was created. The lion, the fox, the mouse, the dog, are in a very limited way true to the accepted nature of the animals which they represent, and their intercourse with each other is governed by the ordinary rules of animal life, but the actions and words are distinctly illustrative of some morality. The fable is an animated proverb. The animals are made to act and speak in accordance with some intended lesson, and have this for the reason of their being. The lesson is first; the characters, created afterward, are, for purposes of the teacher, disguised as animals; very little of the animal appears, but very much of the lesson. The art which invented the fable was a modest handmaid to morality. In Andersen's stories, however, the spring is not in the didactic but in the imaginative. He sees the beetle in the imperial stable stretching out his thin legs to be shod with golden shoes like the emperor's favorite horse, and the personality of the beetle determines the movement of the story throughout; egotism, pride at being proud, jealousy, and unbounded self-conceit

are the furniture of this beetle's soul, and his adventures one by one disclose his character. Is there a lesson in all this? Precisely as there is a lesson in any picture of human life where the same traits are sketched. The beetle, after all his adventures, some of them ignominious but none expelling his self-conceit, finds himself again in the emperor's stable, having solved the problem why the emperor's horse had golden shoes. "They were given to the horse on my account," he says, and adds, "the world is not so bad after all, but one must know how to take things as they come." There is in this and other of Andersen's stories a singular shrewdness, as of a very keen observer of life, singular because at first blush the author seems to be a sentimentalist. The satires, like The Emperor's New Clothes and The Swiftest Runners, mark this characteristic of shrewd observation very cleverly. Perhaps, after all, we are stating most simply the distinction between his story and the fable when we say that humor is a prominent element in the one and absent in the other; and to say that there is humor is to say that there is real life.

It is frequently said that Andersen's stories accomplish their purpose of amusing children by being childish, yet it is impossible for a mature person to read them without detecting repeatedly the marks of experience. There is a subtle undercurrent of wisdom that has nothing to do with childishness, and the child who is entertained returns to the same story afterward to find a deeper significance than it was possible for him to apprehend at the first reading. The forms and the incident are in consonance with childish experience, but the spirit which moves through the story comes from a mind that has seen and felt the analogue of the story in some broader or coarser form. The story of The Ugly Duckling is an inimitable presentation of Andersen's own tearful and finally triumphant life; yet no child who reads the story has its sympathy for a moment withdrawn from the duckling and transferred to a human being. Andersen's nice sense of artistic limitations saves him from making the older thought obtrude itself upon the notice of children, and his power of placing himself at the same angle of vision with children is remarkably shown in one instance, where, in Little

Klaus and Big Klaus, death is treated as a mere incident in the story, a surprise but not a terror.

The naïveté which is so conspicuous an element in Andersen's stories was an expression of his own singularly artless nature. He was a child all his life; his was a condition of almost arrested development. He was obedient to the demands of his spiritual nature, and these led him into a fresh field of fancy and imagination. What separates him and gives him a distinct place in literature is, as I have said, that he was the first child who had contributed to literature. His very autobiography discloses at every turn this controlling genius of childhood, and the testimony of his friends confirms it.

Now that Andersen has told his stories, it seems an easy thing to do, and we have plenty of stories written for children that attempt the same thing, sometimes also with moderate success; for Andersen's discovery was after all but the simple application to literature of a faculty which has always been exercised. The likeness that things inanimate have to things animate is constantly forced upon us; it remained for Andersen to pursue the comparison further, and, let-

ting types loose from their antitypes, to give them independent existence. The result has been a surprise in literature and a genuine addition to literary forms. It is possible to follow in his steps, now that he has shown us the way, but it is no less evident that the success which he attained was due not merely to his happy discovery of a latent property, but to the nice feeling and strict obedience to laws of art with which he made use of his discovery. Andersen's genius enabled him to see the soul in a darning-needle, and he perceived also the limitations of the life he was to portray, so that while he was often on the edge of absurdity he did not lose his balance. Especially is it to be noted that these stories, which we regard as giving an opportunity for invention when the series of old-fashioned fairy tales had been closed, show clearly the coming in of that temper in novel-writing which is eager to describe things as they are. Within the narrow limits of his miniature story, Andersen moves us by the same impulse as the modern novelist who depends for his material upon what he has actually seen and heard, and for his inspiration upon the power to penetrate the heart of things; so that the

old fairy tale finds its successor in this new realistic wonder-story, just as the old romance gives place to the new novel. In both, as in the corresponding development of poetry and painting, is found a deeper sense of life and a finer perception of the intrinsic value of common forms.

This, then, may be taken as the peculiar contribution of Andersen: that he, appearing at a time when childhood had been laid open to view as a real and indestructible part of human life, was the interpreter to the world of that creative power which is significant of childhood. The child spoke through him, and disclosed some secrets of life; childhood in men heard the speech, and recognized it as an echo of their own half-forgotten voices. The literature of this kind which he produced has become a distinct and new form. It already has its imitations, and people are said to write in the vein of Andersen. Such work, and Andersen's in particular, presents itself to us under two aspects: as literature in which conceptions of childhood are embodied, and as literature which feeds and stimulates the imagination of children. But this is precisely the way in which a large body of current literature must be regarded.

IX

IN AMERICAN LITERARY ART

THE conditions of life in the United States have been most favorable to the growth of a special literature for children, but, with one or two notable exceptions, the literature which is independent of special audiences has had little to do with childhood as a subject, and art has been singularly silent. There is scarcely anything in Irving, for example, which touches upon child life. A sentence now and then in Emerson shows an insight of youth, as when he speaks of the unerring instinct with which a boy tells off in his mind the characters of the company in a room. Bryant has touched the subject more nearly, but chiefly in a half-fantastic way, in his Little People of the Snow and Sella. Thoreau could hardly be expected to concern himself with the young of the human race when he had nearer neighbors and their offspring. Lowell has answered the appeal which the death of children makes

to the heart, but aside from his tender elegiac verses has scarcely dwelt on childhood either in prose or verse. Holmes, with his boyishness of temper, has caught occasionally at the ebullition of youthful spirits, as in the humorous figure of young Benjamin Franklin in the Autocrat, and in some of his autobiographic sketches. His School-Boy, also, adds another to those charming memories of youth which have made Cowper, Goldsmith, and Gray known to readers who else would scarcely have been drawn to them ; for the one unfailing poetic theme which finds a listener who has passed his youth is the imaginative rendering of that youth.

Whittier, though his crystalline verse flows through the memory of many children, has contributed very little to the portrayal of childhood. His portrait of the Barefoot Boy and his tender recollection In School Days are the only poems which deal directly with the subject, and neither of them is wholly objective. They are a mature man's reflection of childhood. Snow-Bound rests upon the remembrance of boyish days, but it deals rather with the circumstance of boyhood than with the boy's thoughts or feel-

ings. Yet the poet shows unmistakably his sense of childhood, although one would not be far wrong who understood him as never separating the spirit of childhood from the human life at any stage. His editorial work in the two volumes, Child-Life in Poetry and Child-Life in Prose, is an indication of his interest in the subject, and he was quick to catch the existence of the sentiment in its association with another poet, whose name is more directly connected with childhood. In his verses, The Poet and the Children, he gave expression to the thought which occurred to many as they considered how soon Longfellow's death followed upon the spontaneous celebration of his birthday by multitudes of children.

This testimony to Longfellow was scarcely the result of what he had written either for or of children. It was rather a natural tribute to a poet who had made himself a household word in American homes. Children are brought up on poetry to a considerable extent; they are, moreover, under training for the most part by young women, and the pure sentiment which forms the unfailing element of Longfellow's writings finds in such teachers the readiest response.

When one comes to consider the subjects of Longfellow's poetry, one finds that the number addressed to children, or finding their motive in childhood, is not large. Those of direct address are, To a Child, From my Arm-Chair, Weariness, Children; yet which of these demands or would receive a response from children? Only one, From my Arm-Chair, and that chiefly by the circumstance which called it out, and on which the poet relies for holding the direct attention of children. He gets far away from most children before he has reached the end of his poem To a Child, and in the other two poems we hear only the voice of a man in whom the presence of children awakens thoughts which lie too deep for their tears, though not for his.

Turning aside from those which appeal in form to children, one finds several which, like those last named, are evoked by the sentiment which childhood suggests. Such are The Reaper and the Flowers, Resignation, The Children's Hour, and A Shadow, all in the minor key except The Children's Hour; and this poem, perfect as it is in a father's apprehension, yields only a subtle and half-understood fragrance to a child.

One poem partly rests on a man's thought of his own childhood, My Lost Youth; The Hanging of the Crane contains for its best lines a vignette of infancy; a narrative poem, The Wreck of the Hesperus, has for its chief figure a child; and Hiawatha is bright with a sketch of Indian boyhood. The translations show two or three which include this subject.

While, therefore, Longfellow is repeatedly aware of the presence of children, it is not by the poems which spring out of that recognition that he especially reaches them. In his poem From my Arm-Chair, he refers to The Village Blacksmith; that has a single verse in which children figure, but the whole poem will arrest the attention of children far more than From my Arm-Chair, and it belongs to them more. It cannot be too often repeated that books and poems about children are not necessarily for children. The thoughts which the man has of the child often depend wholly upon the fact that he has passed beyond childhood, and looks back upon it; it is impossible for the child to stand by his side. Thus the poem Weariness contains the reflection of a man who anticipates the after life of chil-

dren; there is nothing in it which belongs to the reflection of childhood itself. Tennyson's May Queen, which has found its way into most of our anthologies for the young, is a notable example of a large class of verses quite unfit for such a place. It may be said in general that sentiment, when made a part of childhood, is very sure to be morbid and unnatural. We have a sentiment which rises at the sight of childhood, but children themselves have none of it; the more refined it is, the more unfit it is to go into their books.

Here is a collection of poetry for children, having all the marks of a sound and reputable work. As I turn its leaves, I come upon a long ballad of The Dying Child, Longfellow's The Reaper and the Flowers, a poem called The Little Girl's Lament, in which a child asks, "Is heaven a long way off, mother?" and for two or three pages dwells upon a child's pain at the loss of her father; Tennyson's May Queen, who is so unconscionably long a time dying; Mrs. Hemans's imitation of Mignon's song in a poem called The Better Land; and a poem by Dora Greenwell which I must regard as the most admirable example of what a poem for a

child should not be. It is entitled A Story by the Fire, and begins, —

"Children love to hear of children!
I will tell of a little child
Who dwelt alone with his mother
By the edge of a forest wild.
One summer eve, from the forest,
Late, late, down the grassy track
The child came back with lingering step,
And looks oft turning back.

"'Oh, mother!' he said, 'in the forest
I have met with a little child;
All day he played with me, — all day
He talked with me and smiled.
At last he left me alone, but then
He gave me this rosebud red;
And said he would come to me again
When all its leaves were spread.'"

Thereupon the child declares that it will put the rosebud in a glass, and wait eagerly for the friend to come. So the night goes and the morning comes, and the child sleeps.

"The mother went to his little room.
With all its leaves outspread
She saw a rose in fullest bloom;
And, in the little bed,
A child that did not breathe nor stir, —
A little, happy child,
Who had met his little friend again,
And in the meeting smiled."

Here is a fantastic conception, extremely puzzling to a healthy-minded child. Imagine the natural questions of a simple, ingenuous boy or girl upon hearing this read. Who is this other child? Why was he coming back when the rose was blown? You explain, as well as you are able, that it was a phantom of death; or, if that seems too pallid, you try to imagine that the poet meant Jesus Christ or an angel by this other little child: but, in whatever way you explain it, you are obliged, if you will satisfy the downright little inquirer, to say plainly, This little boy died, and you begin to wish with all your heart that the poet with all her *ed* rhymes had added *dead*. Then the puzzle begins over again to connect the blooming rose and the little playmate with death. Do you say that you will leave the delicate suggestion of the lines to find its way into the child's mind, and be the interpreter of the poem? This is what one might plead in Wordsworth's We are Seven, for instance. The comparison suggested by the two poems is a partial answer. Wordsworth's poem is a plain, objective narrative, which a child might hear and enjoy with scarcely a notion of what was implied in it,

returning afterward to the deep, underlying sense. This poem of Dora Greenwell's has no real objective character; the incident of the walk in the forest is of the most shadowy sort, and is used for its subtlety. I object to subtlety in literature for children. We have a right to demand that there shall be a clear outward sense, whatever may be the deeper meaning to older people. Hans Andersen's story of The Ugly Duckling is a consummate example of a narrative which is enjoyable by the most matter-of-fact child, and yet recalls to the older reader a life's history.

I have been led into a long digression through the natural correlation which exists between childhood in literature and a literature for children. Let me get back to my main topic by a similar path. The one author in America whose works yield the most fruitful examples in illustration of our subject is Hawthorne, and at the same time he is the most masterly of all our authors who have aimed at writing for an audience of children. Whatever may become of the great mass of books for young people published in America during the past fifty years, — and most of it is already crumbling

in memory, — it requires no heroism to predict an immortality of fame for the little books which Hawthorne wrote with so much good nature and evident pleasure, Grandfather's Chair and the Wonder Book, with its companion, Tanglewood Tales. Mr. Parkman has given a new reading in the minds of many people to the troubles in Acadia, but he has not disturbed the vitality of Evangeline; one may add footnote after footnote to modify or correct the statements in The Courtship of Miles Standish, but the poem will continue to be accepted as a picture of Pilgrim times. So the researches of antiquarians, with more material at their command than Hawthorne enjoyed, may lead them to different conclusions from those which he reached in his sketches of early New England history, but they cannot destroy that charm in the rendering which makes the book a classic.

More notable still is Hawthorne's version of Greek myths. Probably he had no further authority for the stories than Lemprière. He only added the touch of his own genius. Only! and the old rods blossomed with a new variety of fruit and flower. It is easily said that Hawthorne Yankeeized

the stories, that he used the Greek stones for constructing a Gothic building, but this is academic criticism. He really succeeded in naturalizing the Greek myths in American soil, and all the labors of all the Coxes will not succeed in supplanting them. Moreover, I venture to think that Hawthorne's fame is more firmly fixed by means of the Wonder Book. The presence of an audience of children had a singular power over him. I do not care for the embroidery of actual child life which he has devised for these tales; it is scarcely more than a fashion, and already strikes one as quaint and out of date. But I cannot read the tales themselves without being aware that Hawthorne was breathing one air when he was writing them and another when he was at work on his romances. He illustrates in a delicate and subtle manner the line of Juvenal which bids the old remember the respect due to the young. Juvenal uses it to shame men into decorum; but just as any sensitive person will restrain himself in expression before children, so Hawthorne appears to have restrained his thought in their silent presence, — to have done this, and also to have admitted into it the sun-

shine which their presence brought. With what bright and joyous playfulness he repeats the old stories, and with what a paternal air he makes the tales yield their morsels of wisdom! There is no opening of dark passages, no peering into recesses, but a happy, generous spirit reigns throughout.

All this could have been predicated from the delightful glimpses which we now have of Hawthorne's relations to his children, glimpses which his Note-Books, indeed, had already afforded, and which were not wanting also in his finished work. Nor was this interest in childhood something which sprang up after he had children of his own. In that lonely period of his young manhood, when he held converse only with himself, his Note-Books attest how his observation took in the young and his fancy played about them. As early as 1836 he makes a note: "To picture a child's (one of four or five years old) reminiscences at sunset of a long summer's day, — his first awakening, his studies, his sports, his little fits of passion, perhaps a whipping, etc." Again, how delicate is the hint conveyed in a passage describing one of his solitary walks! "Another time I came suddenly on a small Cana-

dian boy, who was in a hollow place among the ruined logs of an old causeway, picking raspberries, — lonely among bushes and gorges, far up the wild valley; and the lonelier seemed the little boy for the bright sunshine, that showed no one else in a wide space of view except him and me." He has elsewhere a quick picture of a boy running at full speed; a wistful look at a sleeping infant, which somehow touches one almost as if one had seen a sketch for a Madonna; and then this passage, significant of the working of his mind, — he is noting a Mediterranean boy from Malaga whom he saw on the wharf: "I must remember this little boy, and perhaps I may make something more beautiful of him than these rough and imperfect touches would promise."

The relation which Hawthorne held to his own children, as illustrated both in the memoirs of him and in his Note-Books, was unquestionably a sign of that profound humanity which was the deep spring of his writings. But it was not, as some seem to think, a selfish love which he bore for them; he could show to them, because the relation was one of the elemental things in nature, a fullness of feeling which found expression

otherwise only as all his nature found outlet, — in spiritual communion with mankind. How deep this inherent love of childhood lay is instanced in that passage in Our Old Home which one reads as it were with uncovered head. It is in the chapter entitled Some Glimpses of English Poverty, and relates how one of the party visiting an almshouse — Hawthorne himself, as his wife has since told us — was unexpectedly and most unwillingly made the object of demonstrative attention on the part of a poor, scrofulous, repulsive waif of humanity. Nothing that he had done had attracted the child, — only what he was; and so, moved by compassion, this strange, shy man took the child in his arms and kissed it. Let any one read the entire passage, note the mingled emotions which play about the scene like a bit of iridescent glass, and dare to speak of Hawthorne again except with reverence.

In the same chapter occurs that delicious little description of children playing in the street, where the watchfulness of the older children over the younger is noted, and a small brother, who is hovering about his sister, is gravely noted as "working a kind of miracle to transport her from one dust

heap to another." He makes the reflection, "Beholding such works of love and duty, I took heart again, and deemed it not so impossible after all for these neglected children to find a path through the squalor and evil of their circumstances up to the gate of heaven."

One of the earliest and most ambitious of his short tales, The Gentle Boy, gathers into itself the whole history of a pathetic childhood, and there seems to have been an intention to produce in Ilbrahim precisely those features which mark the childish martyr and confessor. Again, among the Twice-Told Tales is the winning sketch of Little Annie's Ramble, valuable most of all for its unconscious testimony to the abiding sense of companionship which Hawthorne found with children. In Edward Fane's Rosebud, also, is a passage referring to the death of a child, which is the only approach to the morbid in connection with childhood that I recall in Hawthorne. Little Daffydowndilly, a quaint apologue, has by virtue of its unquestionable fitness found its way into all reading-books for the young.

The story, however, which all would select as most expressive of Hawthorne's sympathy

with childhood is The Snow Image. In that the half-conventional figures which served to introduce the stories in the Wonder Book have passed, by a very slight transformation, into quaint impersonations. They have the outward likeness of boys and girls, but, by the alchemy which Hawthorne used chiefly upon men and women, they are made to have ingenuous and artless converse with a being of other than flesh and blood. It is the charm of this exquisite tale that the children create the object in which they believe so implicitly. Would it be straining a point too far to say that as Andersen managed, whether consciously or not, to write his own spiritual biography in his tale of The Ugly Duckling, so Hawthorne in The Snow Image saw himself as in a glass? At any rate, we can ourselves see him reflected in those childish figures, absorbed in the creation out of the cold snow of a sprite which cannot without peril come too near the warm life of the common world, regarded with half-pitying love and belief by one, good-naturedly scorned by crasser man.

In his romances children play no unimportant part. It is Ned Higgins's cent which does the mischief with Hepzibah, in The

House of the Seven Gables, transforming her from a shrinking gentlewoman into an ignoble shopkeeper; and thus it becomes only right and proper that Ned Higgins's portrait should be drawn at full length with a gravity and seriousness which would not be wasted on a grown man like Dixey. In The Scarlet Letter one might almost call Pearl the central figure. Certainly, as she flashes in and out of the sombre shadows, she contrives to touch with light one character after another, revealing, interpreting, compelling. In the deeper lines one reads how this child concentrates in herself the dread consequences of sin. The Puritan, uttering the wrath of God descending from the fathers to the children, never spoke in more searching accents than Hawthorne in the person of Pearl. "The child," he says, "could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence a great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder." When one stops to think of The Scarlet Letter without Pearl, he discovers suddenly how vital the child is to the story. The scene in the woods, that moving passage where Pearl

compels her mother to replace the scarlet A, and all the capricious behavior toward the minister show how much value Hawthorne placed on this figure in his drama; and when the climax is reached, and Hester, Arthur, and Pearl stand together on the scaffold, the supreme moment may fairly be said to be that commemorated in the words, "Pearl kissed his lips."

It is noteworthy, also, that when Hawthorne was struggling with fate, and, with the consciousness of death stealing over him, made ineffectual efforts to embody his profoundest thoughts of life and immortality, he should have expended his chief art in loving characterization of Pansie, in the Dolliver Romance. Whatever might have come of this last effort, could fate have been conquered, I for one am profoundly grateful that the two figures of grandsire and grandchild stand thus fully wrought, to guard the gateway of Hawthorne's passage out of life.

The advent of the child in literature at the close of the last century was characterized, as I have pointed out, by a recognition of personality in childhood as distinct from

relationship. The child as one of the family had always been recognized, and the child also in its more elemental nature; it was the child as possessed of consciousness, as isolated, as disclosing a nature capable of independent action, thought, and feeling, that now came forward into the world's view, and was added to the stock of the world's literature, philosophy, and art.

"The real virtues of one age," says Mozley, "become the spurious ones of the next," and it is hardly strange that the abnormal development of this treatment of childhood should be most apparent in the United States, where individualism has had freest play. The discovery appears to have been made here that the child is not merely a person, but a very free and independent person indeed. The sixteenth amendment to the constitution reads, "The rights and caprices of children in the United States shall not be denied or abridged on account of age, sex, or formal condition of tutelage," and this amendment has been recognized in literature, as in life, while waiting its legal adoption. It has been recognized by the silence of great literature, or by the kind of mention which it has there received. I am speaking

of the literature which is now current rather than of that which we agree to regard as standard American literature; yet even in that I think our study shows the sign of what was to be. The only picture of childhood in the poets drawn from real life is that of the country boy, while all the other references are to an ideal conception. Hawthorne, in his isolation, wrote of a world which was reconstructed out of elemental material, and his insight as well as his marvelous sympathy with childhood precluded him from using diseased forms. But since the day of these men, the literature which is most representative of national life has been singularly devoid of reference to childhood. One notable exception emphasizes this silence. Our keenest social satirist has not spared the children. They are found in company with the young American girl, and we feel the sting of the lash which falls upon them.

Again the silence of art is noticeable. There was so little art contemporaneous with our greater literature, and the best of that was so closely confined to landscape, that it is all the more observable how meagre is the show in our picture galleries of any history of childhood. Now and then a portrait

appears, the child usually of the artist's patron, but there is little sign that artists seek in the life of children for subjects upon which to expend thought and power. They are not drawn to them, apparently, except when they appear in some foreign guise as beggars, where the picturesqueness of attire offers the chief motive.

In illustration of this, I may be pardoned if I mention my own experience when conducting, a few years ago, an illustrated magazine for young people. I did my best to obtain pictures of child life from painters who were not merely professional book-illustrators, and the only two that I succeeded in securing were one by Mr. Lambdin, and Mr. La Farge's design accompanying Browning's poem of The Pied Piper. On the lower ground of illustrations of text, it was only now and then that I was able to obtain any simple, unaffected design, showing an understanding of a child's figure and face. It was commonly a young woman who was most successful, and what her work gained in genuineness it was apt to lose in correctness of drawing.

I shall be told that matters have improved since then, and shall be pointed to the cur-

rent magazines of the same grade as the Riverside. I am quite willing to concede that the demand for work of this kind has had the effect of stimulating designers, but I maintain that the best illustrations in these magazines are not those which directly represent children. And when I say children, I mean those in whom consciousness is developed, not infants and toddlers, who are often represented with as much cleverness as other small animals and pets. It is more to the point that, while the introduction of processes and the substitution of photography for direct drawing on the wood have greatly enlarged the field from which wood-cuts may be drawn, there is little, if any, increase in the number of strong designs illustrative of childhood. Formerly the painter was deterred from contributing designs by the slight mechanical difficulties of drawing on boxwood. Unless he was in the way of such work, he disliked laying his brush down and taking up the pencil. Now everything is done for him, and his painting is translated by the engraver without the necessity of any help from him. Yet how rarely, with the magazines at hand to use his paintings, does the painter voluntarily seek such subjects!

But if there is silence or scorn in great literature, there is plenty of expression in that minor literature which has sprung up, apparently, in the interest of childhood. It is here, in the books for young people, that one may discover the most flagrant illustration of that spurious individuality in childhood which I have maintained to be conspicuous in our country. Any one who has been compelled to make the acquaintance of this literature must have observed how very little parents and guardians figure in it, and how completely children are separated from their elders. The most popular books for the young are those which represent boys and girls as seeking their fortune, working out their own schemes, driving railway trains and steamboats it may be, managing farms, or engaged in adventures which elicit all their uncommon heroism. The same tendency is exhibited in less exaggerated form: children in the schoolroom, or at play, forming clubs amongst themselves, having their own views upon all conceivable subjects, torturing the English language without rebuke, opening correspondence with newspapers and magazines, starting newspapers and magazines of their own,

organizing, setting up miniature society, — this is the general spectacle to be observed in books for young people, and the parent or two, now and then visible, is as much in the background as the child was in earlier literature.

All this is more or less a reflection of actual life, and as such has an unconscious value. I would not press its significance too far, but I think it points to a serious defect in our society life. This very ephemeral literature is symptomatic of a condition of things, rather than causative. It has not nearly so much influence on young life as it is itself the natural concomitant of a maladjustment of society, and the corrective will be found only as a healthier social condition is reached. The disintegration of the family, through a feeble sense of the sacredness of marriage, is an evil which is not to be remedied by any specific of law or literature, but so long as it goes on it inevitably affects literature.

I venture to make two modest suggestions toward the solution of these larger problems into the discussion of which our subject has led me. One is for those who are busy with the production of books for young people.

Consider if it be not possible to report the activity and comradery of the young in closer and more generous association with the life of their elders. The spectacle of a healthy family life, in which children move freely and joyously, is not so rare as to make models hard to be found, and one would do a great service to young America who should bring back the wise mother and father into juvenile literature.

Again, next to a purified and enriched literature of this sort is a thorough subordination of it. The separation of a class of books for the use of the young specifically is not now to be avoided, but in the thoughtlessness with which it has been accepted as the only literature for the young a great wrong has been inflicted. The lean cattle have devoured the fat. I have great faith in the power of noble literature when brought into simple contact with the child's mind, always assuming that it is the literature which deals with elemental feeling, thought, and action which is so presented. I think the solution of the problem which vexes us will be found not so much in the writing of good books for children as in the wise choice of those parts of the world's lit-

erature which contain an appeal to the child's nature and understanding. It is not the books written expressly for children so much as it is the books written out of minds which have not lost their childhood that are to form the body of literature which shall be classic for the young. As Mr. Ruskin rightly says, "The greatest books contain food for all ages, and an intelligent and rightly bred youth or girl ought to enjoy much even in Plato by the time they are fifteen or sixteen."

It may fairly be asked how we shall persuade children to read classic literature. It is a partial answer to say, Read it to them yourself. If we would only consider the subtle strengthening of ties which comes from two people reading the same book together, breathing at once its breath, and each giving the other unconsciously his interpretation of it, it would be seen how in this simple habit of reading aloud lies a power too fine for analysis, yet stronger than iron in welding souls together. To my thinking there is no academy on earth equal to that found in many homes of a mother reading to her child.

There is, however, a vast organization in-

clusive of childhood to which we may justly commit the task of familiarizing children with great literature, and of giving them a distaste for ignoble books. There is no other time of life than that embraced by the common-school course so fit for introduction to the highest, finest literature of the world. Our schools are too much given over to the acquisition of knowledge. What they need is to recognize the power which lies in enlightenment. In the susceptible period of youth we must introduce through the medium of literature the light which will give the eye the precious power of seeing. But look at the apparatus now in use. Look at the reading-books which are given to children in the mechanical system of grading. Is this feast of scraps really the best we can offer for the intellectual and spiritual nourishment of the young? What do these books teach the child of reading? They supply him with the power to read print at sight, to pronounce accurately the several words that meet the eye, and to know the time value of the several marks of punctuation; but they no more make readers of children than an accordeon supplies one with the power to appreciate and enjoy a sonata of Beethoven.

I do not object to intelligent drill, but I maintain that in our schools it bears little or no relation to the actual use of the power of reading. The best of the education of children is not their ability to take up the daily newspaper or the monthly magazine after they leave school, but their interest in good literature and their power to read it with apprehension if not comprehension. This can be taught in school. Not only so, it ought to be taught, for unless the child's mind is plainly set in this direction, it is very unlikely that he will find the way for himself. I look, therefore, with the greatest interest upon that movement in our public schools which tends to bring the great literature before children.

The study of childhood in literature has led insensibly to observations on literature for children. The two subjects are not far apart, for both testify to the same fact, that in the growth of human life there has been an irregular but positive advance, and a profounder perception of the rights and duties involved in personality.

What may lie in the future I will not venture to predict, but it is quite safe to say

that the form in which childhood is presented will still depend upon the sympathy of imaginative writers with the ideal of childhood, and that the form of literature for children will be determined by the greater or less care with which society guards the sanctity of childish life.

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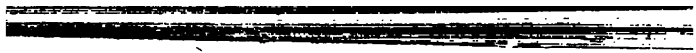

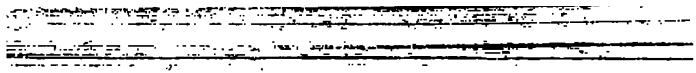

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